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ELIF KESER KAYAALP

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1
Introduction

When we think of the Late Antique churches and monasteries of Northern Mesopotamia, we probably visualize a few Syrian Orthodox monasteries near Mardin. This book stems partly from the need to widen this image by bringing together the scattered material, in the form of architecture, epigraphy, hagiography, and historical sources.[1] It hopes to show that the architecture of Late Antique churches and monasteries of the region constitute important evidence for the Byzantine architecture in the remote parts of the Empire that would compare with other regions and that it is as equally important as other regional architectures like Cilician or Cappodocian. It draws attention to the aspects of church architecture ranging from macro to micro, and sometimes from tangible to intangible, focusing on settlements, variety of plan types, the significant continuity of the classical tradition in the architectural decoration, the diversity of the building techniques, patrons, imperial motivations, and stories that claim and make places.

The period covered in this book is between the fourth and eighth centuries, which spans the last centuries of Byzantine and the first one and a half centuries of Arab rule.[2] The book hopes to offer a regional contribution to the study of the transformation that the Byzantine Empire underwent in the Late Antique period. It aspires to follow the changes in the nature of the church-building activities and church architecture with the Arab conquest. It also aims to contribute to Syriac studies by showing the potential for further research, especially in terms of epigraphy and pointing out some architectural features that are unique to the churches of the Syrian Orthodox to discuss if they served as identity markers. It highlights interactions in this multi-ethnic and multilingual region that shaped the landscape.

[1] There is limited archaeology in the region and the chronicles, saints' lives, and poems require careful reading. The problems about both describing and approaching the textual evidence has been discussed by Mayer for Antioch. W. E. Mayer, 'Approaching Late Antiquity', in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Rousseau (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 1–13. These problems are valid also for Northern Mesopotamia.

[2] This period is chosen not because it conveniently falls into an established period. Rather, the material evidence imposes these dates and confirms the validity of the established dates for Late Antiquity (usually from 250 to 750 or 800) for the region in question (see especially G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar, eds., *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a recent summary of the discussions on extending antiquity to the Islamic period, see M. Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church: The Building of Mosques in Early Medieval Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 5–8.

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Setting geographical limits for architectural studies may prove difficult since there are often no clear-cut boundaries between architectural styles and techniques. However, Northern Mesopotamia provides evidence that makes it easy to talk about it as an entity. Geographically, the term 'Northern Mesopotamia' in this book refers to the region bounded by the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the modern Syria–Turkey border (Fig. 1.1);[3] a region that is known today mostly for the conflicts that have been going on for decades.[4] The region is composed mostly of plains (Harran, Suruç, Ceylanpınar, and Birecik). Ṭur ʿAbdin and the Tektek Mountains, which will often be referred to, are the two low plateaux in the region. The highest geographical feature is a volcanic mountain called Karacadağ, rising in the middle of the region. Mardin Dağları (mountains) compose the second highest geographical feature. The main cities included in this study are Nisibis

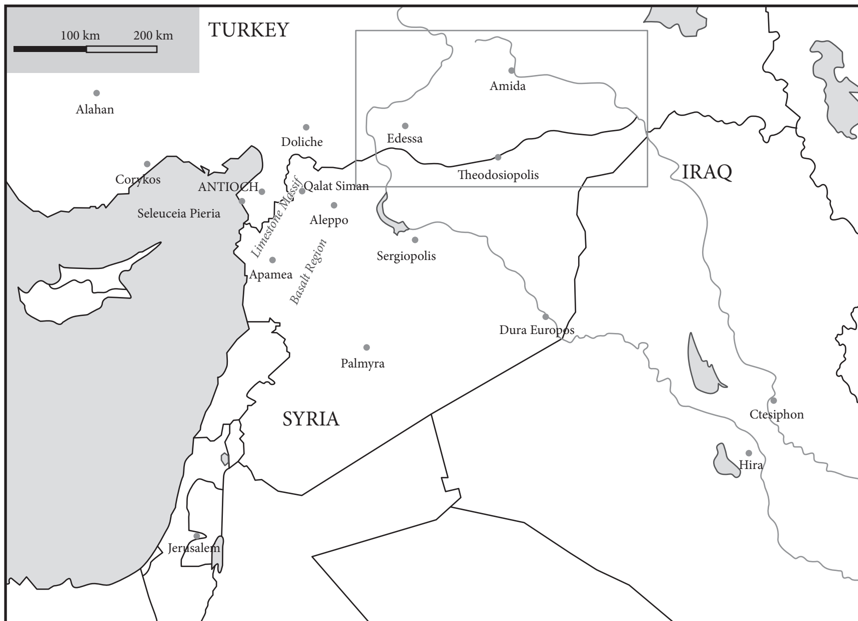

Fig. 1.1 Situation map pointing to the study area and some other locations mentioned frequently in the book

[3] This region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers has been called literally between the rivers: Mesopotamia (in Greek), al-Jazira (in Arabic), and Bet Nahrin (in Syriac). This shows the region was prominent as a geographical entity for its people. For a discussion of the region as a distinct geography and a cultural interspace (although focusing on the Medieval Period), see L. Korn and M. Müller-Wiener, 'Introduction', in *Central Periphery? Art, Culture and History of the Medieval Jazira (Northern Mesopotamia, 8th–15th centuries)*, ed. L. Korn and M. Müller-Wiener (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2017).

[4] These conflicts have been between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the Turkish government.

(Nusaybin), Edessa (Şanlıurfa), Amida (Diyarbakır), Anastasiopolis (Dara/Oğuz), Constantia (Viranşehir), and Martyropolis (Silvan) (Figs. 1.2 and 1.3). While there will be mentions of Batnae (Suruç?) and Carrhae (Harran), I shall not dedicate separate chapters to them. These were not the only cities in the region. We know the names of more cities from the lists of the synods, which are by no means complete.[5] This geographical region does not correspond to one single Byzantine province in the fourth or sixth centuries but covers parts of Mesopotamia, Osrhoene, Armenia IV, and the Sasanian province of Bet ʿArabaye.

The church in the title of the book refers to religious buildings, including also monasteries. As is the case with most of Eastern Medieval Architecture, the best surviving material evidence comes from the churches and monasteries of the region. As Robert Ousterhout argued '. . . the religious buildings represent the concerns that were most important to the society that built them. They have survived for a reason' and 'a church is never only a church'. They 'may stand as a manifestation of piety and the spiritual aspirations of its age, and we would be remiss not to recognize it as such. But it is also a social construct, an emblem of power, prestige, and identity; it represents the combined efforts of artisans of varying backgrounds and social statuses; it is the product of intention, a social contract orchestrated within a hierarchy of command, technical knowledge, and labor.'[6] As we shall see, this is even more true for the contested and multicultural lands of Mesopotamia. Today even in the most run-down villages of the region that I shall deal with, one can find parts of the churches that are still standing. While doing a formal analysis of the churches, the book will also pay attention to some aesthetic solutions to design problems, functional and liturgical needs, and symbolism.[7] Although my focus will be mostly on the churches, I will mention the other monuments when necessary in an attempt to provide a more complete view of the region.

[5] For a table comparing the bishops attending the councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381 and those listed in Notitia Antiochena in the 580s, see David G. K. Taylor, 'The Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia', in *The Syriac World*, ed. Daniel King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 68–87, 70. In 325, the cities listed under Mesopotamia are Edessa, Nisibis, Reshaina, Makedonopolis/Birta, and Fars. In 381, two provinces are listed: Osrhoene and Mesopotamia. Under the former are the cities of Edessa, Batnae, and Carrhae; and under the latter are Amida, Constantia, and Amaria. In Notitia Antiochena, main cities and the sees under them are listed. Edessa, and her sees: Birta, Mʿarta, Harran/Carrhae, Tella/Constantia, Marcopolis, Batnae of Sarug, Telmahrin, Amorin, Circession, Daushar, Callinicum, and Neo-Valentia; Amid, and her sees: Martyropolis, Iggilon, Bolebtina, Aršamišat, Beth Sophanaia, Qidarizon, Hesen Kepha, and Zugmatos; Dara and her sees: Reshaina, Ṭur ʿAbdin, and Menasobion (Banasimeon). Nisibis is listed under the Sasanian province of Bet ʿArabaye in the Synod of 410.

[6] R. G. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture, The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighbouring Lands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), xxiii.

[7] For different methodologies for approaching Byzantine architecture, see M. J. Johnson, R. Ousterhout, and A. Papalexandrou, 'Introduction', in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, ed. M. Johnson, J., R. Ousterhout, and A. Papalexandrou (New York: Routledge, 2016, first published in 2012 by Ashgate), 11–24.

Fig. 1.2 Map of Northern Mesopotamia (western part)

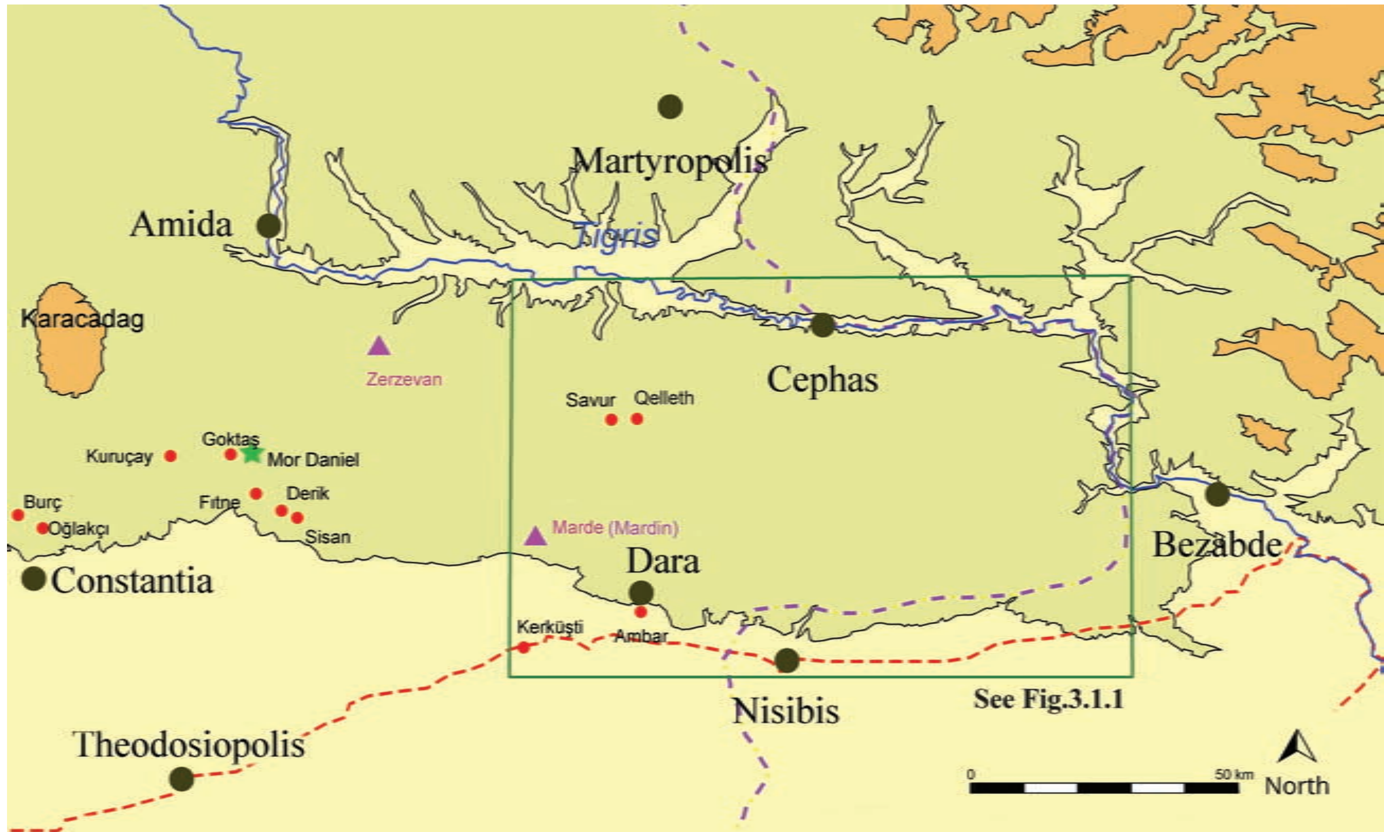

Fig. 1.3 Map of Northern Mesopotamia (eastern part)

Below I shall provide a background that shows that this landscape is prominent, with many different dynamics at work, which inevitably had an impact on the physical spaces. The situation near the border, wars, persecutions within the Empire, the efforts of the Empire to unite the Church, rival claims as to which was the oldest and true faith, Arab conquests, and geography are the main factors that had an impact on the cities, villages, churches, and monasteries of this region. The complicated history of the region cannot be dealt with in more detail here but when dealing with individual cities and buildings, I shall provide more historical data, by trying to see what hagiographies, chronicles, and poems can offer[8] to an understanding of the church buildings.

The book focuses first on the individual cities and their surroundings. As the surroundings of the cities cannot be thought of in isolation from the city, this approach has been preferred to dividing the discussion into cities and countryside or rural. However, Ṭur ʿAbdin is discussed separately as it has a considerable number of standing buildings and it seems to have developed an architectural vocabulary of its own, although connected in ways both to the architecture in the cities and countryside elsewhere in the region. In the Epilogue, a chronological approach has been taken to follow what has changed after the Arab conquest. In the Epilogue, the material is further contextualized under the titles of church plans, building materials and techniques, decoration, builders and patrons, the language of inscriptions, denomination of churches, and communal identity.

1.1 Northern Mesopotamia as a Frontier Region

The foremost defining characteristic of Northern Mesopotamia is probably its status as a frontier region throughout the Roman period and Late Antiquity.[9] As a borderland and stage for continuous warfare between the Romans and Persians (Byzantines and Sasanians), the region has long attracted the attention of students of Late Antique political and military history.[10] The wars of the fourth century

[8] As Palmer argued for his sources on Ṭur ʿAbdin: 'Neither chronicles nor hagiographies can be treated as suppliers of straightforward information. Only by distinguishing levels of composition, sources and motivation can the historian assess the value of the constituent parts.' A. N. Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Ṭur ʿAbdin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1990), xiv.

[9] Some parts of the following pages in this section are revised from my earlier publication: E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Boundaries of a Frontier Region: Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia', in *Bordered Places, Bounded Times, Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Turkey*, ed. E. L. Baysal and L. Karakatsanis (London: British Institute at Ankara, 2017), 135–47. In that article, I used Parker's 'borderland matrix' to visualize the dynamic interactions between different categories of boundaries, namely political, geographic, demographic, economic, and symbolic. I added the latter to Parker's categories. J. Bradley Parker, 'Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes', *American Antiquity* 71/1 (2006): 77–100. For the discussion of the region under all these categories, see Keser-Kayaalp, 'Boundaries of a Frontier Region'.

[10] S. Mitchell, ed., *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at University College, Swansea, in April 1981* (Oxford: British Archaeological

reshaped the borders between the two powers. With the treaty signed by the emperor Jovian in 363, the Roman Empire lost, amongst other places, the important city of Nisibis. Following a period of peace in the fifth century, war broke out again in 502 and continued until 505. During that war, the easy access of Persians to the cities of the region led to the main fortification projects in the region. There followed a period of peace and, consequently, building activity in the region until 528, when another war broke out, which lasted until 531. In 532, the Treaty of Eternal Peace was agreed. It lasted only seven years. From 540, war continued on and off until 562, when another peace agreement was made, and this time it lasted a decade. In 573, Dara fell to the Persians. In 591, the Byzantines reconquered the territories lost to the Persians, after helping Khusrow II to return to the Persian throne. However, this period of co-operation did not last long, and in the years, following Phocas's usurpation in 602, Northern Mesopotamia again fell to the Persians. It remained under their rule until the Emperor Heraclius's reconquest in 623. In 639/640, Arabs conquered the region.[11]

The Tigris was the most prominent geographical boundary in this borderland; hence, when Andrew Palmer talks about Ṭur ʿAbdin, he calls it 'the Tigris frontier'. Palmer discusses at length the frontier in relation to Ṭur ʿAbdin, as a region projecting towards Persian lands.[12] Ṭur ʿAbdin, a high limestone plateau, provided a natural geographic boundary between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires. In addition, it had many fortresses.[13] In the eighth century, the Arab writer Abu Yusuf Yaʿqub, although not a contemporary, provided a description of the frontier which appeared to depend remarkably on the geographical features of the region:

> Before Islam, Mesopotamia belonged in part to the Romans and in part to Persia, each people keeping in its possessions a body of troops and administrators. Ra's al-ʿAyn [Reshaina] and the territory beyond it as far as the Euphrates belonged to the Romans; Nisibis and the territory beyond it as far as the Tigris belonged to the Persians. The plain of Mardin and of Dara as far as Sinjar [Mount Singara] and the desert was Persian; the mountains of Mardin, Dara and Ṭur ʿAbdin were

Reports, 1983); D. French and C. S. Lightfoot, eds., *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at Ankara in September 1988* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1989); R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan, eds., *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity: Papers from the First Interdisciplinary Conference on Late Antiquity* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996); G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[11] For a concise summary of the history of the region, including also the seventh century, see M. Debié, 'The Eastern Provinces of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 11–32.

[12] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 4, 5.

[13] A. Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin and the Confrontation between Rome and Persia', *Anatolian Studies* 67 (2017): 181–229.

> Roman. The frontier between the two peoples was marked by the fort named Sarja [Sargathon], between Dara and Nisibis.[14]

Abu Yusuf Yaʿqub identifies the border region first and foremost by the main cities—Reshʿayna[15] and Nisibis—and, only secondly, does he mention the rivers and the juxtaposition of plains and mountains. In the last sentence, he emphasizes the role of the fort of Sargathon. Accordingly, this frontier was formed by fortified cities, natural barriers, and forts. While studying frontiers today, the emphasis is on 'a network of roads' and 'a distribution of forts and other fortified sites along or across natural frontiers'.[16] Although maps show the border as a line, one must imagine it as a fluid zone. The accounts of Procopius have led some scholars to suggest that Rhabdion Castle, known also as the Castle of Ṭur ʿAbdin (later Qalat Ḥatem Ṭay), and the land around it was a piece of Roman land in Persian territory.[17] These may illustrate how poorly defined the border was.[18]

The fortifications defining this zone can be best pictured by following Procopius's list of the forts that Justinian built or rebuilt in an area stretching between Dara and Amida: namely Cephas, Sauras, Margdis, Lournês, Idriphthon, Atachas, Siphrius, Rhipalthas, Banasymeôn, Sinas, Rhasios, and Dabanas, and 'some others which have been there from ancient times'.[19] Some of these forts have been identified. Cephas is modern Hasankeyf (which means Castle of the Rock in Syriac) and was in fact built by Constantine II together with Rhabdion. Rhipalthas is thought to be 30 kilometres west of Hasankeyf, and Sauras is modern Savur, which has a substantial fort. Margdis is the modern city of Mardin, Rabat is associated with Siphrius and Banasymeon with Qartmin or Mor Gabriel monastery.

[14] Cited in Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 7.

[15] This book has not included this city, which is in the boundaries of Syria today. For the names of the monasteries around the city, see H. Takahashi and L. Van Rompay, 'Reshʿayna', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 351.

[16] F. Curta, 'Introduction', in *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. F. Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 1–9, 3.

[17] Procopius, *On Buildings*, trans. H. B. Dewing and G. Downey (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1940), 2.4.3.

[18] As Comfort points out, the Peutinger Table, a fourth- or fifth-century map of the road network of the Roman Empire, shows no frontier in the east and depicts routes continuing to Nisibis. However, letters beginning at a point between Hatra and Nisibis mark Persian territory; but, as Comfort notes, 'there is no attempt to indicate between which cities Roman territory ended and Persian territory began'. Comfort summarizes the various suggestions of L. Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie orientale et pays adjacents: Contribution a la géographie historique de la région, du Ve s. avant l'ère chrétienne au VIe s. de cette ère* (Paris: Geuthner, 1962), 233; E. Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches: von 363 bis 1071 nach griechischen, arabischen, syrischen und armenischen Quellen* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales, 1935); and Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 7, and he suggests his own. A. Comfort, 'Roads on the Frontier between Rome and Persia: Euphratesia, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia from AD 363 to 602', PhD thesis submitted to Exeter University, UK, 2008, 237–41.

[19] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.4.14.

Idriphthon has been identified with Hisarkaya, located north of Savur.[20] There are other fortresses in the region that stand out as substantial settlements with great potential for archaeology. For example, Serçehan, identified as Sargathon, located a few kilometres east of Nisibis, can be considered as a standard quadriburgium type of fort.[21] Kale-i Zerzevan is a substantial settlement with a church, probably for use by soldiers and their families only, and is identified as Samachi.[22] Hisarkaya and Kale-i Zerzevan are fortified hilltop settlements similar to those in the Balkans.[23]

1.2 Christological Debates

The Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) had a great impact on the social and cultural formation of the region. The 'Church of the East' did not accept the Council of Ephesus[24] and the Syrian Orthodox Church, together with other Oriental Orthodox Churches, did not concur with the Council of Chalcedon, which agreed that Christ was to be acknowledged as existing in two natures. A large number of Christians in a broad region, mainly those who spoke Syriac, rejected this Christological formula. The Christians who rejected Chalcedon came to be known as Monophysites, but there is now a preference for the term 'Miaphysites'.[25]

Although at the beginning, the bishoprics of the cities of Mesopotamia were alternating between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian bishops, the persecutions of the non-Chalcedonians eventually prepared the ground for the development of a separate Church hierarchy. In the formation of the Syrian Orthodox

[20] For more discussion on the identifications, see Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin'.

[21] For similar examples, see J. Crow, 'Fortification and the Late Roman East: From Urban Walls to Long Walls', in *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Sarantis and N. Christie (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 397–432, 412.

[22] F. W. Deichmann and U. Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten in Nordmesopotamien* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977), 33. Recent excavations in this settlement will be mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.4, 'Amida'.

[23] Crow, 'Fortification and the Late Roman East', 424.

[24] Associating this Church with Nestorius, who was condemned in the Council of Ephesus, has been described as the result of a hostile historiographical tradition by Brock. Brock called the Church of the East's traditional label as the 'Nestorian Church' a 'lamentable misnomer' as he thinks it does not reflect the Christological teachings of the Church of the East. S. P. Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church: A Lamentable Misnomer', *BJRL* 78/3 (1996): 23–36.

[25] For a summary of the theological discussions see T. Hainthaler, 'Theological Doctrines and Debates within Syriac Christianity', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 377–90 and 378 for the preference of the term 'miaphysite', and D. W. Winkler, 'The Syriac Church Denominations: An Overview', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 119–33. For the formation of the Syrian Orthodox Church, see also V. L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1972), x–xii.

Church hierarchy, John (d. 538), the exiled bishop of Tella/Constantia, played an important role. He began to ordain deacons and priests so that the non-Chalcedonians did not have to receive their Eucharist from a Chalcedonian clergy. The network he created was seen by the contemporaries as a distinguished community, a *politeia*. According to Andrade, the biographers of John perceived the members of John's *politeia* as determined 'by faith and ascetic behaviour, not ethnicity, culture, or native region, and it had the potential to transcend the authority of the imperial institutions that sanctioned persecution and endorsed religious impiety' and thus they saw John as someone exposing the 'the artificiality of the border located between Nisibis and Dara, which only existed through administrative logistics and the rigorous implementation of military force'.[26]

A few decades later, Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578) from Tella, played an important role in the survival of the Syrian Orthodox church. After Baradaeus, the church was called by some 'Jacobite'. This term is considered hostile as it pictures him as the founder of the Church. Jacob was sent to Constantinople in 527/8 to look after the Miaphysites there. Justinian's wife Theodora gave the Palace of Hormisdas to their use. With the help of Theodora, he was consecrated in Constantinople as the bishop of Edessa to look after the non-Chalcedonian communities. He ordained many bishops, priests, and deacons. He travelled in disguise, which is the reason for his name burdʿoyo 'dressed in saddle-cloth'. Sebastian Brock says he should be seen as someone who was providing the pastoral needs of the Miaphysite community all over the Near East.[27] After Justinian, the negotiations between these Christological positions continued. The situation of the Syrian Orthodox depended on the attitudes of the emperors.[28] The formation of this new hierarchy had an impact, not only on the landscape of the rural parts of the region, but also in the cities, as I shall discuss below.

[26] N. J. Andrade, 'The Syriac Life of John of Tella and the Frontier Politeia', *Hugoye* 12/2 (2009): 199–234, 218. An anecdote showing the nature of the boundary: John of Tella was captured in the Sinjar mountains by a joint Roman and Persian patrol, and by the marzban, the border guard. He was crossing the border between the two great Empires. John said to the marzban: 'It is not the first time that I have crossed over into this land. This is the third time that I have crossed over, in order that I might pray among these saints who have lived for many years on the mountain (Jebel Sinjar) from which you took me away as an evil-doer. For who am I that your greatness knows of me and (knows that) I had crossed over then? For I am a poor man, just as you see me. Today, while there is complete peace between these two kingdoms, I did not know one state from another. For the two kings are brothers in love; and, if I am here, I think I am among Romans, and, if I am among Romans, I am here on account of (that) peace' (trans. Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, 98).

[27] S. P. Brock, 'Yaʿqub Burdʿoyo', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. P. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 431.

[28] For the period after Justinian, and for the situation under brief Persian occupation, see Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 316–53.

1.3 After the Arab Conquest

This book's chronology extends to the period after the Arab conquest. By 639/640, all of Mesopotamia was under Arab rule.[29] With the conquest of the region, the frontier shifted to the west of the Taurus Range.[30] Although limited in geographical extent, the survey of Kurbanhöyük, which is located in the western part of the region we study, pictures a peak of settlements in the sixth century, then a temporary drop in the seventh and then a rise again in the eighth century.[31] Surveys in the Middle Euphrates region between Deir ez-Zor and Abu Kamal,[32] and the Balıkh Valley[33] also show expansion of settlements in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.[34] In the Limestone Massif of Syria, which has many common properties, especially with Ṭur ʿAbdin, villages are recorded to have lasted to the ninth and tenth centuries.[35] There was notable agricultural development in these areas in that period. Although there has not been a similar systematic survey in the Northern Mesopotamia, the textual, architectural, and epigraphic evidence may suggest a similar image.[36]

The picture we have for the situation of the region after the conquest comes from Syriac sources. As Penn argues, there was not a unified Syriac view of Islam. Sources range 'from overtly antagonistic to downright friendly', making any

[29] Robinson says we know less about the conquest and its aftermath in northern parts but more on the Mosul area. C. F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

[30] See A. A. Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier, Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), especially 277–309, describing the region as settled and dynamic. He suggests a drop in settlement number in the mid-tenth century.

[31] T. J. Wilkinson, *Town and Country in Southeastern Anatolia, v.1, Settlement and Land Use at Kurban Höyük and Other Settlements in the Karababa Basin* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1990).

[32] S. Berthier, ed., *Peuplement rural et aménageme aménagements hydroagricoles dans la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrate, fin VIIe– XIXe siécle* (Damascus: IFEA, 2001).

[33] K. Bartl, 'Balih Valley Survey. Settlements of the Late Roman/Early Byzantine and Islamic Period', in *Continuity and Change in Northern Mesopotamia from the Hellenistic to the Early Islamic Period*, ed. K. Bartl and S. Hauser (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996) 333–48.

[34] See T. J. Wilkinson, 'Regional Approaches to Mesopotamian Archaeology: The Contribution of Archaeological Surveys', *Journal of Archaeological Research* 8/3 (2000): 219–67, for regional variations, and also for an overview of the surveys in other parts of Mesopotamia. See also Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 127–57 for an evaluation of the surveys in Balikh and Habur (Khabur) River valleys.

[35] J. P. Sodini et al., 'Déhès (Syrie du nord) Campagnes I–III (1976–1978): Recherches sur l'habitat rural', *Syria* 57 (1980): 1–301; G. Tate, *Les Campagnes de la Syrie du Nord du IIe au VIIe Siècle: Un Exemple d'Expansion Démographique et Économique à la Fin de l'Antiquité* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 1992).

[36] The surveys in Syria and Iraq suggest a drop in settlement numbers in the tenth century with the Hamdanid rule. Some suggested that the main reason for that was the cutting off of the relationship with Jazira (H. Kennedy, 'The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia', *Iraq* 73 (2011): 177–99), and this may also suggest a denser settlement in Jazira (also pointed out by Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 156). For an overview of decline theories based on Arab conquests and their revision by Islamic archaeology in Syria, Palestine, and Jordan, see A. Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 23–30.

generalization about Christian-Muslim relations reductionist.[37] Although it is true that Islamic conquests resulted with a cultural break, Humphreys pointed out that 'we should not imagine that the churches of the East were isolated by the Islamic conquests; we might rather argue that Constantinople and Rome were now cut off from the intellectual and devotional energy that these centres had provided'.[38] Besides their impressive intellectual productivity, especially in the Syriac language, Christian communities also left eminent architectural remains under early Islam. Although architectural evidence from Syria and Palestine has usually been the focus of attention, Christian building in the early Islamic period stretched from Iraq and the Persian Gulf to Egypt and Armenia. In Ṭur ʿAbdin, we see the seeds of a consistent architectural vocabulary in that period.[39]

Until ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 705), the Umayyads seem to be not interested in converting the Christians. They needed the poll tax (*jizyah*) that they imposed on the Christians. Although Christians thought this was a phase, by the early eighth century, they seemed to understand that Arab rule would not end soon. The questions and answers of Jacob, the miaphysite Bishop of Edessa (d. 708), give interesting insights into the reactions of the Christians to this new religion.[40] After the Abbasid revolution in 750, conversion to Islam became more prevalent. However, for this period as well there are different accounts, as some thought Abbasid caliphs valued the Christians more highly than the Umayyads. However, it should be noted that the situation of the East and West Syrians probably differed.[41]

To determine the approach to church building after the conquest is equally difficult. It has been argued that, the main document concerning the prohibition of church- building, the Pact of ʿUmar, dates later than the mid-seventh century.[42] In the process of the production of the Pact of ʿUmar, various versions were composed reflecting different positions on the subject, some being more tolerant towards Christians. These versions give interesting insights into the Muslims' approach towards church building. According to the version of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820),

[37] M. Penn, 'Early Syriac Reactions to the Rise of Islam', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 175–88.

[38] S. Humphreys, 'Christian Communities in Early Islamic Syria and Northern Jazira: The Dynamics of Adaptation', in *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria*, ed. J. Haldon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 45–56.

[39] E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Church Building in the Tur Abdin in the First Centuries of the Islamic Rule', in *Continuity and Change in the Mediterranean 6th–10th Century C.E.*, ed. A. Delattre, M. Legendre, and P. M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[40] M. Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 160–74. See also R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997).

[41] D. Wilmshurst, 'The Church of the East in the ʿAbbasid Era', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 189–203.

[42] M. Levy-Rubin, 'Shurūt ʿUmar and its Alternatives: The Legal Debate on the Status of the Dhimmīs', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005): 170–206.

in a city which has a specific peace agreement or in which *dhimmī*s live separately, the building of churches was acceptable. Levy-Rubin quotes Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 805) who writes that the *dhimmī*s are allowed to keep their prayer-houses or rebuild them: 'If the Muslims establish a city in that place, they should tear down the synagogues and churches there, but the *dhimmī*s should be allowed to build similar ones outside the city.'[43] This seems the only mention of the countryside in those texts. Their focus is almost exclusively on cities and except for al-Shāfiʿī's version, all of them call for a ban on building new churches.

Robinson points out that amongst the Christians, the discussion was more about who had authority over the churches once built, East or West Syrians.[44] Around Mosul, it was clearly the East Syrians, but Nisibis, for example, was a contested place. The *Life* of Simeon of the Olives (d. 734), bishop of Harran, illustrates this notion quite well. Its interpolation also shows the changing attitudes of the Muslims towards church building.[45] The *Life* of Theodotus of Amida (d. 698) describes Christian authorities in charge of Samosata, Ṭur ʿAbdin, Maypherqat, and Dara. He was dragged to a mosque in Amida because of being accused to be a friend of Byzantines. His *Life* also tells the visit of the tax-collector who came to collect money from the monastic community.[46] Based mainly on these accounts, Robinson argued that there was a loose, taxation-based provincial administration. Local elites were not much affected, and the power of some urban Christian notables might have increased.[47] As in Syria, Muslims were likely more concerned to control building activity in the cities, probably because they primarily settled there,[48] but were less engaged or more tolerant in the countryside. Thus, this situation may have made the church building/rebuilding activities in the region, which we shall discuss in Section 4.2, possible.

The Chronicle of Zuqnin (concerning events until 775) extends to the period after the Abbasid revolution. The chronicle's accounts of the first years after the Abbasid revolution include the destruction of monasteries in the region.[49]

[43] Levy-Rubin, 'Shurūt 'Umar', 179.

[44] Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 14.

[45] J. Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives: A Christian Puzzle from Islamic Syria', in *Motions of Late Antiquity: Essays of Religion, Politics, and Society in Honor of Peter Brown*, ed. J. Kreiner and H. Reimitz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 309–30. I shall discuss his *Life* further in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis', Chapter 3, 'Ṭur ʿAbdin', and Chapter 4, the Epilogue.

[46] A. Palmer, 'Āmīd in the Seventh-century Syriac Life of Theodūṭē', in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. E. Grypeou et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 127–36. I thank A. Palmer for sharing his forthcoming translation with me. Life of Theodotus of Amida. Translated by A. Palmer, In *The Life of Theodotus of Amida: Syriac Christianity under the Umayyad Caliphate, Texts from Christian Late Antiquity*, edited by R. G. Hoyland, A. Palmer, and J. B. Tannous (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, forthcoming), sections 85.1, 135.3, and 89.1.

[47] Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, x, 43–57. His focus has been mainly on Mosul as we have a detailed account of the region in that period by Azdī.

[48] Argued for Syria by Foss. C. Foss, 'Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: An Archaeological Approach', *DOP* 51 (1997): 189–269, 268.

[49] A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn, Parts III and IV: A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 193.

However, for the mid-eighth century, the chronicle indicates the prosperity of the Christians by saying that the land was productive and shrines began to be built and churches renovated. Although the chronicle also mentions that the caliph issued an order to register the properties of churches and monasteries in 768/769, in general, it does not paint a dark picture of oppression. The account of the Caliph's visit to the region supports a picture of a flourishing province until 769. Seeing the prosperity of the region, 'Instead of thanking him for this state, the caliph, who is described as a man who sets his mind more toward the sword than toward peace, roared over Abbas saying "Where is it that you said that the Jazira was in ruins?" Then he took away his assets and treated him with all kinds of evils.' The caliph appointed agents to take a census of all the people for a poll tax and 'from here misfortunes began'.[50] The confusing accounts in the Chronicle of Zuqnin is probably due to the involvement of multiple authors in the writing of this chronicle.[51]

While there were also apocalyptic accounts of the conquest and its aftermath, some West Syrian sources saw the Islamic conquest as a punishment for Byzantine ecclesiastical policy and expressed a sense of relief. The *Life* of Theodotus (d. 698) tell us that some Syrian Orthodox living by the border had to move to Byzantine territories because of food shortage in the region under the Arabs and those refugees were persecuted by the Byzantines to make them change their faith. Theodotus met the Byzantine authorities and made them promise they will not put Syrian Orthodox under pressure.[52] The confusing statements regarding the situation of the Christians under Islam continued also in Dionysius of Tel-Mahre who wrote in the second half of the ninth century (d. 846).[53] Humphreys suggested that Dionysius wants his readers to see Islamic rule as being 'simultaneously a gift of Divine Providence and a test and a temptation for the faithful'.[54] Despite providing interesting accounts about building churches, literary sources fail to communicate the extent of building and patronage, the changing nature of villages and monasteries, and architectural features. Under the individual headings of cities in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 3, Ṭur ʿAbdin, I shall refer to church building/rebuilding under the Arabs in more detail.

[50] Harrak, *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, 230, 246.

[51] P. Wood, 'The Chroniclers of Zuqnin and their Times (*c.*720–75)', *PdO* 36 (2011): 549–68.

[52] *Life* of Theodotus of Amida, 115.2 and 116.3.

[53] A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993); W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jacobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit. Nach orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1966); S. Brock, 'Syriac Views of Emergent Islam', in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Brock (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984); J. Van Ginkel, 'The Perception and Presentation of the Arab Conquest in Syriac Historiography: How did the Changing Social Position of the Syrian Orthodox Community Influence the Account of their Historiographers?', in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. E. Grypeou, M. N. Swanson, and D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 171–84.

[54] Humphreys, *Christian Communities*, 49.

1.4 Research on the Region

The region has been a focus of attention for political history as a result of being a frontier, for church histories because of the Christological discussions, and for linguistic studies due to literary production in Syriac. The physical remains have received comparatively little attention. The early accounts of the region are by western travellers and military officers of the early twentieth century, whose accounts now provide important information, especially for the lost buildings.[55] The region was mapped during that period.[56] Greek, Latin, and Syriac inscriptions were recorded.[57] Some buildings were described in more detail.[58] Amongst the scholars of the twentieth century who studied the region, we should single out Gertrude Bell. Her two publications on Ṭur ʿAbdin (a limestone plateau located just to the north of Nisibis)[59] were edited by Marlia Mundell Mango, supplemented

[55] J. G. Taylor, 'Journal of a Tour in Armenia, Kurdistan, and Upper Mesopotamia, with Notes of Researches in the Deyrsim Dagh, in 1866', *JRGS* 38 (1868): 281–361. W. F. Ainsworth, 'Notes on a Journey from Kaisariyah, by Malatiyah, to Bir or Birhejik, in May and June, 1839', *JRGS* 10 (1840): 311–40; W. F. Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia* (London: 1842); W. F. Ainsworth, *A Personal Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition* (London: Kegan Paul Trench, 1888); J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia: Including a Journey from Aleppo to Bagdad, by the Route of Beer, Orfah, Diarbekr, Mardin and Mousul: With Researches on the Ruins of Nineveh, Babylon, and Other Ancient Cities* (London: H. Colburn, 1827). A. Socin, 'Zur Geographie des Tûr 'Abdîn', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 35 (1881): 237–69; H. K. Von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin: Mittler, 1893). C. E. Sachau, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1883). O. Parry introduced the region to many: *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery, Being the Record of a Visit to the Head Quarters of the Syrian Church in Mesopotamia with some Account of the Yazidis or Devil Worshippers of Mosul and El Julwah, their Sacred Book* (London: H. Cox, 1895). See also S. Yérasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l'empire ottoman (XIV–XVI siècles), Bibliographie, itinéraires et inventaire des lieux habités* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991).

[56] F. R. Chesney, *Expedition for the Survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850); R. Kiepert, *Syrien und Mesopotamien zur Darstellung der Reise des Dr. Max Freiherrn von Oppenheim vom Mittelmeere zum Persischen Golf 1893 I, II, 1: 850000* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1915). For a detailed map of the region by Kiepert online, see Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. 'C6. Diarbekir'. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed 12 July 2020. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/95d1a99c-80e7-c2f1-e040-e00a18064f41. There is also a detailed series of maps produced by the British War Office on which ruins are marked: F. R. Maunsell, *Eastern Turkey in Asia* [map series]. 1:250 000. London: War Office, Intelligence Branch, 1900).

[57] M. A. S. Oppenheim and M. V. O. H. Lucas, 'Griechische und Lateinische Inschriften aus Syrien, Mesopotamien und Kleinasien', *BZ* 14 (1905): 38–75; B. Moritz, 'Syrische Inschriften', in *Inschriften aus Syrien, Mesopotamien und Kleinasien*, ed. M. von Oppenheim (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913). C. Humann and O. Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien: ausgeführt im Auftrage der Kgl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1890). H. Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1907).

[58] C. Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler altchristlicher und islamischer Zeit* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1911); F. P. T. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1911); F. F. C. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt* (Berlin: B. Behr, 1910). I shall refer to them in more detail when discussing the individual monuments.

[59] G. L. Bell, 'The Churches and Monasteries of Tur Abdin', in *Amida: matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulmanes du Diyarbekr*, ed. M. Van Berchem and J. Strzygowski (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1910), 224–62. G. L. Bell, 'Churches and Monasteries of the Ṭur 'Abdin and Neighbouring Districts', *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur* 9 (1913): 61–112.

by notes from Bell's previous publications, her unpublished journals and notebooks in the Royal Geographical Society in London, and her unpublished photographs that are now kept at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.[60] Mundell Mango's introduction and catalogue of sites expanded the boundaries of Bell's previous publications from Ṭur ʿAbdin to wider Northern Mesopotamia.

The book on Amida by Max van Berchem and Joseph Strzygowski, which includes a contribution also by Bell on Ṭur ʿAbdin, is another important publication that enables one to contextualize Amida and Ṭur ʿAbdin together.[61] In this book, Strzygowski discusses the Great Mosque of Amida and the churches of the city, and also the Octagon in Constantia. He linked the origins of Christian art to this region. He acknowledges the remarkable architecture but mentions it together with the Syriac textual sources to support his view that Early Christian Architecture has its roots in the Orient. Strzygowski describes the cities of Edessa, Amida, and Nisibis, 'which play an important role in the rise of Christian art', as centres where Hellenistic art flourished. He continues: 'This Aramaic hinterland to Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and even Egypt, by combining, as it does, the forces of Nearer Asia, is the progenitor of the germinal forms of Christian art . . . From what Vogüé had published and from the important further advances that were recently made by the Princeton Expedition, we should have expected Northern Mesopotamia to present a similar picture to Syria, perhaps somewhat reduced and provincialized. It was a great surprise to find that the exact opposite is the case. We might have formed a suspicion of it from "The Chronicle of Edessa" and the Theological School of Nisibis, but recognition of the fact was first brought home to us by a comparison of the great central churches of Wiranschehr, Resapha and Amida. How amazing individual achievement must have been in urban ecclesiastical architecture alone!'[62]

Although he described this architecture as 'amazing individual achievement', his assumption that one would expect to find architecture similar to Syria, 'perhaps somewhat reduced and provincialized' in this region prevailed in the scholarship until recently. Given his racist views, later scholarship might have been reluctant to share his views.[63] In his influential textbook on early Christian and Byzantine architecture, Richard Krautheimer has a section entitled 'Mesopotamia

[60] G. L. Bell and M. Mundell Mango, *The Churches and Monasteries of the Ṭur 'Abdin with an Introduction and Notes by M. Mundell Mango* (London: Pindar Press, 1982). The archive is available online: http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/.

[61] M. Van Berchem and J. Strzygowski, with a contribution by G. Bell, *Amida* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1910).

[62] J. Strzygowski, 'The Origin of Christian Art', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 20/105 (1911): 140–53, 150–1.

[63] On Strzygowski and his utilization of scholarship: S. L. Marchand, 'The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: The Case of Josef Strzygowski', *History and Theory* 33/4 (1994): 106–30.

and Ṭur Abdin' under the chapter 'The Borderlands'. He provides a plan of the Mor Gabriel monastery and a picture of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ. He mentions the East Syrian churches on the other side of the border, at Ctesiphon and Hira. He pictures the whole of Mesopotamia as a land where we find local or folk architecture, and describes the complex architectural sculpture of the region as imported from Syria.[64] He does not mention the urban church architecture.

Ousterhout, in his very recent textbook, deals with the region under the title 'Transformation at the Edges of Empire' where he covers the seventh through ninth centuries. He treats the region's architecture together with that of the Caucasus, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt. He notes that church construction in most of Mesopotamia is known only from excavation. In Northern Mesopotamia, only the cathedral of Nisibis and foundations of the cathedral in Dara have been excavated, and the lack of sufficient archaeology in the region for this period is a problem. About churches, by which we understand him to mean urban churches, he says: 'Most were simple basilicas, with tripartite sanctuaries, often squared off.' He then turns to Ṭur ʿAbdin. Although his focus is the transitional period, he points out that by the sixth century, in Ṭur ʿAbdin, distinct architectural forms were developed, like the 'transversally barrel-vaulted nave with a tripartite sanctuary'. He singled out five monuments, namely the monasteries of Mor Gabriel, Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ, Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ, and Mor Loʿozor at Ḥabsenas.[65] In fact, only the last two date to the 'transitional period', but for the sake of the organization of the book, the earlier period is also briefly mentioned here. It is a comprehensive selection of monuments given that this book is a monumental textbook on Byzantine Architecture.

Turning back to the publications focusing on the region, we can mention Ugo Monneret de Villard who published on the churches and monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin, which may have contributed to the later interest of the Italian archaeologists in the region.[66] Between 1950 and 1975, expeditions to the region started again, one of which was carried out by the University of Michigan in 1956. It was never published because, according to Jules Leroy, it did not go beyond taking pretty photographs.[67] In the 1960s, Leroy and his team conducted architectural

[64] R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th edn, revised by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 301–4.

[65] Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 277–80.

[66] U. Monneret de Villard, *La Chiese della Mesopotamia*, (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1940). Turkish translation is used in this book: *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekânlar* (İstanbul: Yaba, 2012). A recent exhibition (2018) in the Research Centre of Anatolian Civilizations at Koç University shows this interest: Picturing a Lost Empire: An Italian Lens on Byzantine Art in Anatolia, 1960–2000. The other publications will be mentioned when relevant.

[67] J. Leroy, 'Recherches archéologiques sur les églises de Ṭur 'Abdin', *Comptes rendus de séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 111–12 (1967): 324–33, 330.

surveys in Ṭur ʿAbdin and produced important drawings.[68] In the second half of the seventies and the early eighties, there was again a considerable interest in the region and this is when Marlia Mundell Mango updated Bell's works mentioned above and published most of her articles on the region.[69] Gernot Wiessner, a theologian, published his documentation of the monuments of Ṭur ʿAbdin between 1982 and 1993. His corpus, composed of eight volumes (including photographs and plans), provides more material for comparison although he avoids dating and architectural contextualization.[70]

Palmer's work, which explores the monastic life in the Late Antique Monastery of Mor Gabriel in Ṭur ʿAbdin through texts and architectural remains, is not confined to this monastery but sheds light on the wider Ṭur ʿAbdin.[71] His corpus of Syriac inscriptions of Ṭur ʿAbdin is a mine of information about the dating and patronage of some of the churches.[72] His recent article on monasteries provides a systematic analysis of the texts based on geography.[73] Apart from these, members of the Syrian Orthodox community of Turkey published books on Ṭur ʿAbdin and on individual villages and monasteries.[74] Hans Hollerweger's book with beautiful pictures and forewords by the Patriarch, Brock, and Palmer is a useful introduction to the region.[75]

Excavations and archaeological surveys have been extremely limited in the region. The most prominent excavation in the region related to Late Antiquity is Kale-i Zerzevan. The excavations in Nisibis have been continuing on and off for some time. In Dara, excavations started again in 2020. There have been excavations in Harran, Haleplibahçe, and the Kızılkoyun and Kale Eteği area in Urfa.[76] Recently, a remarkable village church has been excavated in Gola near Göktaş by

[68] Leroy, 'Recherches archéologiques'; J. Leroy, 'L'état présent des monuments chrétiens du sud-est de la Turquie (Tur 'Abdin et environs)', *Comtes rendus de séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 112–14 (1968): 478–93.

[69] Mundell Mango published studies on various buildings and sculpture of the region, which I shall refer to in the relevant sections.

[70] G. Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten im Ṭūr ʿAbdīn* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982–93) and G. Wiessner, *Nordmesopotamische Ruinenstätte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980).

[71] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*.

[72] A. Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions from Ṭur 'Abdin and Environs', *OC* 71 (1987): 53–139.

[73] A. Palmer, 'La Montagne Aux LXX Monastères', in *Le monachisme syriaque*, ed. F. Jullien (Paris: Geuthner, 2010).

[74] G. Akyüz, *Bakısyan Köyü'nün Tarihçesi* (İstanbul: Anadolu Ofset, 2004); Y. Bilge, *Mor Gabriel Manastırı* (İstanbul: Gerçeğe Doğru Kitapları, 2011); Z. Demir, *Tur Abdin'de bir Süryani Mıhallemi Köyü: Habsus* (İstanbul: Anadolu Ofset, 2013).

[75] H. Hollerweger, *Turabdin: Where Jesus' Language Is Spoken* (Linz: Rudolf Trauner, 1999).

[76] N. Yardımcı, *Harran: Mezopotamya'ya açılan kapı* (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2007). H. Karabulut, M. Önal and N. Dervişoğlu, *Haleplibahçe Mozaikleri, Şanlıurfa/Edessa* (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2011). B. Çetin, M. Demir, A. Desreumaux, J. Healey, and P. Liddel, 'New Inscriptions in Aramaic/Early Syriac and Greek from the Cemeteries of Edessa', *Anatolia Antiqua* 28 (2020): 119–41, respectively. Excavations in Dara, Nisibis, and Kale-i Zerzevan are mentioned in more detail below in the related sections.

the Museum of Mardin.[77] The Museum of Mardin also did some cleaning work in the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ and in the Monastery of Mor Loʿozor at Ḥabsenas. A number of salvage excavations and surveys have been undertaken in the sites that were to be submerged due to the construction of the Ilısu (Batman vicinity) and Karkamış (Carchemish) dams (Birecik vicinity) (under the project for the development of Southeast Anatolia, GAP).[78] The period of Late Antiquity was not a high priority for any of these projects, but some produced material about the Late Antique and early Islamic period.[79] In Hasankeyf (Cephas), which was an important late Roman fortress, the focus has been mainly on the Islamic remains.

The picture these surveys portray is as follows: in the Late Antique period of the fourth to sixth centuries, there was a high density and wide distribution of settlements along both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. To cite one example, a small area in the westernmost part of Mesopotamia, around Kurbanhöyük, in the Lower Karababa basin along the Euphrates River, was surveyed, and changes in settlement patterns over time have been suggested, based on the interpretation of surface sherding. This survey was one of many such surface surveys carried out under 'The Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project'.[80] It has been claimed that all available settlement niches were occupied due to the increased trade as a result of Osrhoene's provincial status and the presence of troops. This also led to an increase in agricultural investment and production, and the attraction of immigrants to the area for work.[81]

The priority given to the areas to be affected by the dams and the security issues resulted in less attention to the area between the rivers. Despite that priority, a survey has been undertaken in the Harran plain.[82] Tahsin Korkut, from Yüzüncü Yıl University in Van, continues a survey in Ṭur ʿAbdin which he started in 2017. A recent survey done by the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

[77] See https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/seyahat/galeri-mardinde-1624-yillik-kiliseye-ait-mozaikler-gun-yuzune-cikariliyor-41617857/8 (News are from September 2020). Accessed on 21 November 2020.

[78] N. Tuna and J. Velibeyoğlu, eds., *Ilısu ve Karkamış Baraj Gölleri altında kalacak arkeolojik kültür varlıklarını kurtarma projesi: 2000 yılı çalşmaları* (Ankara: ODTÜ Tarihsel Çevre Araştırma Merkezi, 2002).

[79] Surveys in the area have been summarized by M. Decker, 'Frontier Settlement and Economy in the Byzantine East', *DOP* 61 (2007): 217–67.

[80] See for the final report: G. Algaze et al., 'The Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project: Final Report on the Birecik and Carchemish Dam Survey Areas', *Anatolica* 20 (1994): 1–96.

[81] G. Algaze, *Town and Country in Southeastern Anatolia*, *vol. 2, The Stratigraphic Sequence at Kurban Höyük* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1990), 126, fig. 6.2. Also see Algaze, 'The Tigris-Euphrates', fig. 18 showing the dramatic peak in the number of settlements in the late Roman period in the Birecik-Carchemish area.

[82] N. Yardımcı, *Harran Ovası yüzey araştırması* (Istanbul: Kolektif Kitap, 2004). However, in that work, Roman, Late Roman, or Early Islamic sites are not differentiated. For survey of the Balikh valley, further south, and other surveys (which are not in the geographical limit of this book) see Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 127–57.

(Kültürel Mirası Koruma Derneği, KMKD) focused on the buildings in Ṭur ʿAbdin that are under threat of disappearance. I also participated in this survey and we were able to visit some monasteries that could not be reached for decades due to security reasons.[83] There is still a need for detailed field surveys in the region around Derik and the region known as the Tektek mountains.

[83] Fifty-eight buildings were recorded in three five-day field trips in 2018 and 2019. It focused on risks and what can be done to preserve the monuments. E. Keser-Kayaalp, ed., *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in Ṭur ʿAbdin* (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming).

2
Cities and Their Churches

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall deal with six cities of the region that have the remains of church architecture. While doing so, I shall first give a brief history of that city in Late Antiquity and mention some of the archaeological remains dating to that period and some buildings that were recorded in the historical sources. The churches in the cities shall be analysed under individual headings and the hinterland of that city shall be discussed by focusing on the ecclesiastical buildings. Of the cities that we are concerned with, Amida (Diyarbakır) and Edessa (Şanlıurfa) are the two big cities of the region today. Martyropolis (Silvan), Constania (Viranşehir), and Nisibis (Nusaybin) are considerably large towns, which are densely inhabited. Dara lost importance and became a small village, and thus, retained remarkable remains from the Late Antique period. Amida, Edessa, Martryopolis, and Carrhae continued to be important in the medieval period and their city walls were repaired extensively.[1] By way of introduction, this section points out some of the properties of these cities in relation to each other and draws some common features.

These cities were crucial for the defence of the Empire and, thus, were built with strong walls.[2] Edessa and Amida were comparable in size to Gerasa and Aphrodisias. So they can be considered middle-sized, whereas Constantia, Martyropolis, and Dara were smaller. Amida had to be enlarged to accommodate the newcomers when Nisibis and some other regions were lost. The layouts of Dara, Edessa, and Amida followed the topography, which resulted in amorphous forms. Constantia and Martyropolis, and probably Nisibis, were quadrilateral. The main arteries of the cities (*cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus*), running from north to south and east to west, especially visible in Amida and in Constantia and traceable in Edessa, remained unchanged throughout the centuries. Although Edessa underwent important changes and one can hardly find traces of the antique city except in parts of the city walls and the citadel, and in the courtyard of the great

[1] Restorations recorded by Arabic inscriptions: A. Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie orientale* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1940), 136.

[2] Crow, 'Fortification and the Late Roman East', 397–432, 411. For military architecture in the eastern frontier, see the third volume of S. Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture on the Eastern Frontier* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1995); for the catalogue entries of sites in Mesopotamia: Amida, 59–65; Martyropolis, 66–9; Kale-i Zerzevan, 76–9; Dara, 80–8, and Resaina, 89–93.

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mosque, one can follow the traces of the orthogonal city planning. Edessa, Dara, and Amida are known to have had colonnaded streets. Edessa and Dara also had riverside porticoes. The presence of a tetrapylon in Amida is known and there is archaeological evidence for possible tetrapylons at Dara and Constantia.[3]

Water was an important element in the choice of the location of these cities and in the shaping of their general features. All cities of Northern Mesopotamia are located beside or close to a river; for example, the river Mygdonius (Çağçağ) by Nisibis, the river Tigris (Dicle) by Amida, the river Nymphius (Batman Su) by Martyropolis, the river Curcup by Constantia, the river Scirtus (Karakoyun) by Edessa, and the river Cordes (Oğuz çayı) of Dara. Cisterns, dams, watermills,[4] and aqueducts[5] were built to control water and they became important elements of urban and suburban landscapes. In Dara, the main axis of the city running north–south (*cardo*) is parallel to the river. In Edessa, the important buildings, and possibly the cathedral, were located around the fish-pools. Amida is located at an ideal distance from the River Tigris on the east, using it as a kind of defensive trench. The city has an impressive monumental aspect when viewed from the Tigris.

Imperial patronage played an important role in the building of structures that served the management of water. Procopius mentions the direct involvement of the emperor Justinian in the precautions taken against the flood of the rivers in Dara and Edessa. In Edessa, he diverted the course of the River Scirtus.[6] For the control of water in Dara, he is claimed to have consulted the two famous architects of St. Sophia in Constantinople, Anthemius and Isidorus, and the *mechanikos* Chryses of Alexandria. The latter carried out the project on the site. The emperor also built a number of reservoirs in Dara.[7] Constantia was another city that received the emperor Justinian's intervention in terms of water works. There, he brought the stream which was a mile away 'within the wall by means of an aqueduct, and adorned the city with ever-flowing fountains'.[8]

Especially during the reign of Anastasius, there was significant military construction undertaken in the region, including the foundation of the city of Dara, which resulted in the construction and decoration of some churches in the nearby monasteries. Under the emperor Justinian, the walls of almost all cities received extensive rebuilding and he seems to have been involved in the building of some of the monumental churches.[9] The loss of a city, and the foundation and fortification of a city by the enemy caused resentment that continued for centuries; for

[3] References for these are given under the headings of the individual cities.

[4] See A. Wilson, 'Water-mills at Amida: Ammianus Marcellinus 18.8.11', *Classical Quarterly* 51/1 (2001): 231–6. There are remains between Dara and Ambar that also suggest a watermill.

[5] J. B. Segal, *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 186; a water channel coming from the north of the city is mentioned in Constantia (Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.5.9–11).

[6] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.7.1.

[7] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.2.1.

[8] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.5.11.

[9] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.

example, the loss of Nisibis devastated the Byzantines, and the foundation of Dara in 505 frustrated the Persians. The treaty signed at the end of the war in 561/562, decades after the foundation of Dara, states that: 'Henceforth the Persians shall not complain to the Romans about the foundation of Dara. But in future neither state shall fortify, i.e., protect with a wall, any place along the frontier, so that no pretext for trouble shall arise from this and the treaty thus be broken.'[10] After Khusrow II returned Martyropolis to the Byzantines in 591 out of gratitude for Emperor Maurice's support in gaining back his throne, he commissioned a long Greek inscription on the walls of Martyropolis, turning the city's walls into 'epigraphic billboards'.[11] He emphasized the shared Roman and Persian history of the city and his return of it to the Romans.[12] Thus, we see that these cities by the frontier became places of negotiation and declaration.

The cities of the region were also centres of trade. From Diocletian's time, Nisibis was the official market for Roman and Persian trade, and retained this status after its conquest by the Persians. The hymns of Ephrem the Syrian on Nisibis describe the city as 'a wealthy cosmopolitan commercial centre on the border of the empires'.[13] In a Latin text written probably in the fourth century in Alexandria, Edessa is described as 'bubbling with commercial activity and dealing profitably with every province', possessing the best businessmen who were rich and supplied with all goods.[14] Batnae was a big trading centre in which an annual fair was held.[15] Both Syriac and Greek accounts mention the amazement of Persian shahs at the wealth of these cities. A section from the chronicle of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre describing Khusrow's visits to the palaces of Marinus the Chalcedonian and Iwannis Rusafoyo illustrates that the elite citizens of Edessa were enjoying a prosperous life. The palace of Īwannis had beautiful buildings and a 'complete service of gold and silver implements, tables, plates, serving dishes, spoons, dessert dishes, drinking goblets, wine jars, pitchers, flagons, basins, and vessels of every kind, all of silver and gold'.[16] Similarly, the baths of Amida were praised. After the Persian shah Kawad took Amida in 503/504, he ordered that

[10] Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, 133.

[11] Crow, 'Fortification and the Late Roman East', 398, 408.

[12] C. Mango, 'Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse Sassanide: L'inscription Historique de Martyropolis', *TM* 9 (1985): 91–104, 101–4.

[13] D. D. Bundy, 'Vision for the City: Nisibis in Ephraem's Hymns on Nicomedia', in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. R. Valantasis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 189–206, 191.

[14] Expositio, *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*. Introduction, French translation and notes by J. Rougé (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 22.

[15] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935–39. Reprinted, 1971–72), 14.3.3.

[16] Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, 123. Towards the end of the sixth century, the Persian king Khusrow II had removed a total of 112,000 lbs of silver from the thirty churches of Edessa (Chronicle of 1234, 180). Mundell Mango argues that the furniture revetments of St. Sophia of Edessa were equal to those of St. Sophia at Constantinople and they could, therefore, have totalled 20,000 Roman lbs of silver. She estimates that other churches of Edessa may have owned a total of 3000–5000 Roman lbs of silver each, M. Mundell Mango, 'The Uses of Liturgical Silver, 4th–7th

baths should be built in all the towns of the Persian territory after his experience in the public bath of Amida.[17] Dara, a newly built city in the sixth century, was given all the privileges of a city and had public baths, store houses, barracks, porticoes, a palace, an aqueduct, a *xenodocheion* (guest house), and two churches.[18] This shows the continuity of the perception of the classical city until the sixth century.[19] Texts also mention buildings such as the *praetorium*,[20] public baths,[21] the hippodrome,[22] amphitheatre,[23] theatre,[24] and antiforos[25] in these cities. Apart from the buildings and the layout, the classical character of the cities seems to have been preserved in some of the practices of daily life.[26]

The cities were not just made up of walls and buildings. The stories and the cults were also instrumental. When Anastasius founded Dara, the main defensive settlement in the region, relics of St. Bartholomew were brought to the city, and a

Centuries', in *Church and People in Byzantium*, ed. R. Morris (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham, 1990), 245–61, 261.

[17] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*. Translation with notes and introduction by F. R. Trombley and J. W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, Translated Texts for Historians 32 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 61.

[18] Malalas, *Chronographia, The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. E. Jeffreys (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1986), 399; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1914–28), 1.22.3.

[19] For the continuity of some of the classical features of the late antique cities in Anatolia, see I. Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance of Civic Space: The 'Classical' City from the 4th to the 7th c. AD. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 193* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013).

[20] For a possible praetorium in Dara, see E. Zanini, 'The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning in Byzantine New Cities of the Sixth Century AD', in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. L. Lavan and W. Bowden (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 196–223; fig. 6. A praetorium is also recorded in Edessa (Segal, *Edessa*, 111).

[21] In Dara, Anastasius built two public baths (Malalas, *Chronographia*, 399) (according to local people, a bath was found to the north of the city, just outside the walls) and there were both summer and winter baths in Edessa (Segal, *Edessa*, 110). Taylor records seeing a bath in Constantia (Taylor, 'Journal of a Tour', 354).

[22] In the north-west part of Edessa by the city wall was a hippodrome (Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.7.9).

[23] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 76. M. Assénat and A. Pérez, 'Amida Restituta', in *Et in Aegypto, et ad Aegyptum, Recueil d'Etudes dédiées à J. C. Grenier*, ed. A. Gasse et al. (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2012), 7–52, 19.

[24] In Edessa, on the eastern side near the outlet of the river was a theatre: Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 27.

[25] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 42–3 and Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2, 7, 6. Antiforos is a market for provisions. The presence of an antiforos was also recorded for Antioch, Daphne, and Constantinople. C. Mango, 'Le Terme Antiforos et la vie de Saint Marcien économe de la grande église', *TM* 15 (2005): 317–28.

[26] Alexander, the governor of Edessa in 496/7, placed a box in front of the *praetorium* for people who wished 'to make something known and it was not easy for him to do so openly'. He used to sit every Friday at the shrine of St. John the Baptist and St. Addai the Apostle and settle legal cases without any expense. It was the same governor who asked artisans to hang crosses with five lighted lamps over their shops on the eve of Sunday. He cleared the streets of filth and swept away the booths that had been built by the artisans (Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 29). The booths built on the porticoed streets are usually discussed while talking about the transformations undergone by the Late Antique city in the East and thus we see an effort to preserve the classical features. For the transformations of the streets, see H. Kennedy, 'From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria', *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 3–27.

church dedicated to him was built.[27] The name of the city of Martyropolis comes from the relics of the Christian martyrs that Marutha, the bishop of the city, brought from Persia in around 412. The renowned poet, Ephrem the Syrian, saw holy men as the wall and shield of Nisibis and her countryside. Muriel Debié argues that Syriac literature contributed to the reconstruction of cities after catastrophes by reminding the inhabitants to trust in their God and clergy.[28] As we shall discuss in the relevant sections, the foundation and Christianization stories of these cities that were produced in the Late Antique period increased the great pride taken from these cities.[29] The cults, relics, histories, Christological disputes, and efforts to overcome them resulted in impressive churches that established or empowered the Christian identity of these cities.[30]

I shall deal with the cities of Nisibis, Edessa, Amida, Dara, Martyropolis, and Constantia under separate headings. There is not much left of the church architecture in the other Late Antique cities of the region. However, Batnae (Suruç) and Carrhae (Harran) deserve a brief mention here as they were significant in the Late Antique period. Carrhae is usually identified as the biblical town where Abraham dwelt. Fadana, which was about 6 miles from Harran, was believed to have Prophet Jacob's well. Due to these associations, the city became a pilgrimage centre in Late Antiquity. It was a major town during the Early Islamic period. Despite that fact, paganism survived in the city up until the eleventh century.

The city was visited by Egeria in the fourth century and by the Piacenza pilgrim in the sixth century. Egeria notes: 'except for a few clergy and holy monks who live there, I found no Christians, for they are all pagans.' Nevertheless, she mentions a martyrium of Helpidius in Harran and a 'large and beautiful' church near the well in Fadana.[31] Ephrem's accounts of Harran picture a small Christian community in the city in the fourth century.[32] Sources mention a Monastery of Abraham in Fadana close to the city,[33] and a Monastery of Mor Lazarus and a Great monastery of Kfar Tebna, both just outside the city.[34]

[27] E. Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 65.

[28] M. Debié, 'Réparer les brèches: Monuments littéraires et théologie politique dans les villes syriaques des frontières', in *Reconstruire les villes: Modes, motifs et récits*, ed. E. Capet et al. (Turnhout: Brepols 2019), 254.

[29] Debié, *Réparer les brèches*, 231–54.

[30] For the discussion of that desire for the newly built cities of Late c. Antiquity, see E. Rizos, 'Introduction', in *New Cities in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Rizos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 9–13, 11.

[31] Egeria, *Itinerarium, Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, trans. J. Wilkinson (Jerusalem, Warminster: Ariel, Aris and Phillips, 1981), 20.8 and 20.5.

[32] U. Possekel, 'The Transformation of Harran from a Pagan Cult Center to a Christian Pilgrimage Site', *PdO* 36 (2011): 299–310.

[33] A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1958), vol. 2, 238.

[34] Both mentioned in the *Life* of Simeon, S. Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery of Mar Gabriel in Tur Abdin', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 28 (1979): 168–82, 178. For more on the *Life*, see Section 2.2. 'Nisibis'.

A church, which was probably of a Late Antique foundation, was recorded in the early 1950s in the north-east part of Harran.[35] Seton Lloyd and William Brice suggested an 'extremely tentative' reconstruction of the church since there was 'nothing more than a litter of fallen stones'. One of the octagonal piers was still standing. Today, one can see some scattered stones but the pier does not stand.[36] Lloyd and Brice proposed cruciform piers for the arcades and octagonal ones for the apse arch. Because of an undisturbed series of voussoirs, they thought that the naves and aisles were both vaulted. They suggested an exterior colonnade on the south of which two columns remained standing, the rest having fallen next to their bases. According to their reconstruction as a three-aisled basilica, the church has a narthex in the west end, which is flanked by side rooms, and a five-sided polygonal apse.[37] The church measured 23 metres by 42 metres, excluding the apse. Lloyd and Brice did not comment on the date of the basilica. They report that the capitals of the nave arcade bore a stylized acanthus design, while those of the octagonal chancel arch piers had a more elaborate leaf pattern.[38] A baptismal font, now at the Urfa Museum, is recorded to have come from Harran. However, it is difficult to ascertain its date. There is also a capital with a Syriac inscription in the museum, which is recorded to have come from Harran.[39] A medieval church in the city, which has been found recently, will be published soon.[40]

It has been suggested that there were fifteen to twenty villages in the territory of Late Antique Harran.[41] Sumatar, located around 50 kilometres to the north-east of Harran is significant, with pre-Christian Syriac inscriptions on funerary monuments and memorials.[42] Egeria, in her way to Edessa from Antioch, stopped in

[35] S. Lloyd and W. Brice, 'Harran', *Anatolian Studies* 1 (1951): 77–111.

[36] For some aerial photographs, see M. Ulukavak, et al. 'Arkeolojik kazı alanlarının insansız hava aracı değerlendirme uçuşu: Harran Bazilika Kilise Örneği', in *Harran ve Çevresi Arkeoloji*, ed. M. Önal, S. İ. Mutlu, and S. Mutlu (Şanlıurfa: ŞURKAV 2019), 457–65.

[37] For more on polygonal apses, see Section 2.5.1, 'The Cathedral'.

[38] Lloyd and Brice, 'Harran', 106–8.

[39] It is a capital with a bust. Its Syriac inscription reads 'built by Bar Kmr'. H. J. W. Drijvers and J. F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene: Texts, Translations, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), As 57. The capital has been dated by Strong to not later than the first half of the third century and has been considered as unique in the area because of the presence of a bust. Strong in J. B. Segal, 'Two Syriac Inscriptions from Harran', *BSOAS* 20 (1957): 513–22, 521–2). Similar capitals that have been dated to the fourth or fifth centuries have recently been excavated in the Kızılkoyun necropolis in Edessa. See Çetin, et. al. 'New Inscriptions', figs. 7 and 8. When the whole range of capitals in Northern Mesopotamia are considered, it is possible to suggest even a later date, contemporary with the development of the appearance of busts and animals in the upper zones of the capitals in the sixth century in the wider Byzantine Empire. In Northern Mesopotamia, the type is best exemplified by two capitals from the Persian side, from the Monastery of Abraham of Kashkar (571). See Fig. 2.2.12.

[40] Personal communication with Mehmet Önal, the head of the excavations in Harran, in July 2020.

[41] F. R. Trombley and J. W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), xlvi.

[42] For a recent article bringing together the bibliography, see J. Healey, 'The Pre-Christian Religions of the Syriac-speaking Regions', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 47–68. For photographs and other pre-Christian settlements around Harran, see S. E. Güler, *Şanlıurfa Yazıtları* (İstanbul: *Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları*, 2014).

Batnae, where she saw a church, and several martyria.[43] Batnae is usually associated with Suruç (Sarug), which is around 60 kilometres to the north-west of Harran. According to Michael the Syrian, Batnae was one of the four ancient towns on which medieval Sarug is located. He also mentions the ancient city of Dimitar as lying next to Sarug.[44] This name does not appear in the lists of Late Antique cities.[45] Suruç (Sarug) is especially famous for its bishop Jacob of Sarug (451–521) who was a prolific author. Two monasteries are known from sources that have a connection to Sarug: a monastery called Silas (between the sixth and eighth centuries)[46] and Mar Shīlā where a synod was held in 705/706.[47] It is surprising that there are not any visible Late Antique remains in modern Suruç. It was probably destroyed in an earthquake in 678.[48] However, it has been noted that satellite imagery dating to the 1960s showed a square enclosure measuring around 650 x 740 metres, which is today under the modern town.[49] There is a village called Göldere (locally called Kufri), which is around 15 kilometres east of Suruç and has substantial remains. Göldere has not been published so far and requires detailed analysis. It looks like a Roman settlement, later inhabited by Christians.[50] Apart from that, in a place called Mıcıt around Suruç, a mosaic inscription recording the pavement of a church has been recorded.[51]

2.2 Nisibis

Considered as ‘the strongest bulwark of the Orient’,[52] Nisibis (modern Nusaybin) was an important military, commercial, and intellectual centre.[53] It was the official

[43] Egeria, *Itinerarium*, 19.I.

[44] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899–1924. Reprinted, Brussels, 1963), book 12, ch. 12.

[45] A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 542–3.

[46] Hage, *Die syrisch-jacobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit*, 108.

[47] Chronicle of Zuqnin, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn, Parts III and IV: A.D. 488–775*, trans. A. Harrak (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 148 (156).

[48] Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, 81–2.

[49] Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 123.

[50] Structures are built in ashlar masonry. The roofs are covered with flat slabs resting on corbels projecting out from the side walls. These structures seem to be the lower level of probably two-storied buildings of which the lower level may have been used as storage. The most substantial structure is intact with its roof. It has transverse arches resting on engaged piers. Flat slabs cover the roof. The series of windows lighting the interior are made by using the stones vertically. The stones used here are comparatively shorter but this technique is also seen in different places in the region, such as in Senemağara, Şuayipşehir, and in Nisibis. There is nothing significantly Christian about this building. The stone for the structures in Göldere must have been taken from the quarry by the necropolis, which lies to the west of the settlement. There are many pottery sherds scattered to the north of the necropolis. There are also heaps of stones in that location hinting at some foundations. This settlement deserves further detailed research.

[51] Güler, *Şanlıurfa Yazıtları*, 72.

[52] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 25.8.14.

[53] Some parts of the following section have been developed from my article with N. Erdoğan: E. Keser-Kayaalp and N. Erdoğan, ‘The Cathedral Complex at Nisibis’, *Anatolian Studies* 63 (2013): 137–54. I thank Nihat Erdoğan for his permission to use the material.

market for Roman and Persian trade, and it retained this status after its surrender to the Persians in 363. The loss of Nisibis was a great shock to the Romans, who continued to threaten the city from their newly founded city of Dara, built just opposite Nisibis, to the irritation of the Persians. The Romans tried to retake the city many times, but failed. Nisibis, together with most of Northern Mesopotamia, eventually fell to the Muslim Arabs in 639.

Nisibis had been an important centre of Syriac-speaking Christianity. Its theological school was relocated to Edessa after the conquest of Nisibis by the Persians. The best known of its many prolific authors is Mor Ephrem, who wrote hymns also about Nisibis that give insights into the contemporary state of affairs.[54] The Christians of Nisibis continued to survive under the Persians. The east Syrian metropolitan province of Nisibis was established in 410 and continued until the fourteenth century. In the 470s Narsai, a well-known Syriac-speaking poet and a former teacher at the theological school of Edessa, re-established the school at Nisibis. When the school at Edessa was closed by Zeno in 489, many of Narsai's former colleagues and students joined him, making Nisibis the main centre of theological studies for the Church of the East.[55]

The few remains from the Late Antique city of Nisibis consist of the following: the building which is today known as the Church of Mor Yaʿqub, some columns with Corinthian capitals standing in the no-man's land between the Syrian and Turkish borders, some architectural fragments displayed in the public park of the municipality, and a mosaic which is now in the Gaziantep Museum. Of the ancient bridge recorded by Gertrude Bell,[56] nothing has survived. The scant remains from Late Antiquity may partly be due to an earthquake that destroyed the city in 717.

For the period after the Arab conquest, we see traces of rebuilding in the baptistery, and there are some textual sources that would support this.[57] The *Life* of Simeon of the Olives (d. 734) is a remarkable account listing the churches and monasteries that Simeon built or rebuilt in and around the city. Jack Tannous has discussed the anachronistic accounts that were added later to the *Life*.[58]

[54] Ephrem the Syrian, *Carmina Nisibena*, ed. and trans. E. Beck (Louvain: CSCO, 1961–63).

[55] Winkler, 'The Syriac Church Denominations', 119.

[56] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, pl. 68.

[57] See Section 2.2.1, 'The Baptistery'.

[58] J. Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives'. We shall mention more about the possible building activities of Simeon of the Olives in Chapter 3, Ṭur ʿAbdin. I would like to thank Gabriel Rabo for providing the typed Syriac text, Jack Tannous for sharing his English translation and David Taylor and fellow students in the Syriac class for reading the text with me. The manuscripts that contains the life date to nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the manuscripts is the fenqitho (service book) of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel from which a summary of the *Life* to which I often refer was published: Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 168–82. Brock's complete translation will be published in R. Hoyland, ed., *The Life of Simeon of the Olives* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, forthcoming). Palmer mentions parts of the *Life* in *Monk and Mason*, ch. 5. Tannous argues that the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives was written in the several decades after his death in 734. He discusses the many problems that

According to his *Life*, Simeon went to Caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–833), who was active almost a century after Simeon's death, to get permission to build in the city. After his analysis of the text and comparisons and tracing the sources of interpolations, Tannous argues that the original Life of Simeon 'must have focused primarily on Simeon's extensive building activities and great personal piety'. Tannous thought his building activities were the original part of the *Life*,[59] and he has also argued that Simeon probably did not need permission for his building activities. He, thus, thinks the part about the caliph was probably added because of the desire to show Muslim tolerance, when tensions were rising because of the opposition to church building in the later centuries. However, the whole part that is related to his building activities in Nisibis city centre seems to be the result of interpolation, not just the part dealing with getting permission from the caliph.[60] The account of Simeon's patronage of a mosque and a *madrasa* next to the Church of Mor Theodore,[61] the exaggeration of the decoration of the church,[62] and the account that the construction of the Church of Mor Theodore was hindered by the Nestorians three times, may be considered as further evidence for the overemphasis of his acts in Nisibis. The notion of Simeon turning to Gawargi, the leader who held authority over Ṭur ʿAbdin, for help in acquiring workers for the construction of the church is also notable as Simeon has to gain the trust of Gawargi who is a Christian of a different denomination. So the picture

the text presents. According to the *Life*, Simeon's nephew found a treasure in a hunting expedition. Simeon used this money to build or restore churches and monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin and in and around Nisibis. Simeon also bought numerous properties and planted olive trees from which he later provided the whole of the Ṭur ʿAbdin with oil. That is why he was called 'Simeon of the Olives' (Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 176). Tannous suggests the tenth century for the interpolation of the text; Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives', 326, fn. 101. Hoyland says it was more likely written in the twelfth century (Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 169). Hoyland notes that there is evidence of the reliability of this account as some people mentioned in the text appear in an inscription in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel and the Chronicle of 819.

[59] Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives', 323.

[60] Simeon was allowed to buy a monastery outside the eastern gate of Nisibis. He restored it and to the south of it he built a hostel. Inside the east gate of Nisibis, he bought numerous properties and the ruins of the Church of Mart Febronia, on which he built a large church dedicated to the Theotokos. He also built the great Church of Mar Theodore the martyr (Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 176). He restored the Monastery of Theotokos and that of Mart Febronia (probably a different church dedicated to Febronia). He also built the Monastery of Mar Dimet to the south of the church that he had built. To endow these three monasteries, he bought shops, courtyards, and houses. He also erected a building for the great mill-stone to the north-east of Mar Theodore with a tower adjoining the city wall. He donated it to the monastery of Qartmin. He bought some baths and donated them to the Monastery of Mor Elisha, but he instructed that any surplus from these should go to the monastery of Qartmin (Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 177).

[61] Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 176; especially noting that he was 'on excellent terms with the Arab authorities'.

[62] The *Life* of Simeon of the Olives tells us that choice marble was brought overland from a Mediterranean port for the cathedral of the martyr Theodore in Nisibis, which was consecrated by the patriarch Julian II (688–708). Marble was used for the altar (8 spans by 4 spans) and for the base of the *bema* of this church (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 164). It brings to mind the description of the altar at Mor Gabriel monastery (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 124).

provided by the *Life* is that the Church of Mor Theodore in Nisibis was built despite the resistance of the Nestorian community, with the permission of the caliph, and the support of the local rulers. These are additional ideas to support Tannous's argument that the *Life* was utilized later for contemporary needs. The adoption of a city, which had an East Syrian past, as a West Syrian city may be an additional motivation besides the desire to picture a powerful Syrian Orthodox bishop who could build in an important city like Nisibis.

The difficulty of reconstructing the physical topography of the Late Antique city of Nisibis in the absence of any substantial evidence has already been discussed.[63] However, some hypothetical guidelines can be suggested based on the accounts of the city by contemporary writers and later Arab travellers, the travel notes of J. M. Kinneir (a nineteenth-century traveller), the modern layout of the town, and the general tendencies in the city plans of the region in the Late Antique period. Two accounts may indicate that the eastern wall of the city ran alongside the river. During one of the many Persian sieges of the city in the fourth century, King Shapur stopped the river Mygdonius by means of a dam. When the river was ready to overflow, his men burst the dam and the water destroyed the walls of the city.[64] Kinneir, who visited the city in 1813–14, reported that the ruins occupied a large space along the bank of the river Mygdonius.[65] Kinneir estimated the circumference of the walls to be 3 miles or more. This is close to the perimeter given by the fourteenth-century Arab historian Mustawfi, who states that the circumference of the city was 6,500 paces[66] (about 4.8 kilometres). If we imagine a rectangular layout with that perimeter, we see that the ancient city stretched further south than the modern city, towards the Syrian border (Fig. 2.2.1). If we accept this suggestion for the general contours of the ancient city, the modern main roads fall conveniently in the places where we would expect the *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus* to be. Al-Muqaddasi (d. after 998) tells us that Nisibis had a castle, walls, four gates, and a mosque at its centre. A market stretched from one gate to the other.[67] Unfortunately, no traces of any of these monuments remain but there are many column capitals and shafts from different parts of the city that have been gathered in a public park.

[63] P. S. Russell, 'Nisibis as the Background to the Life of Ephrem the Syrian', *Hugoye* 8 (2005).

[64] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. L. Parmentier, F. Scheidweiler, and G. Hansen, 3rd edn (Theodoretus: Kirchengeschichte. GCS n.f. 5. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 2.26.

[65] J. M. Kinneir, *Journey through Asia Minor, Armenia and Koordistan in 1813 and 1814* (London: John Murray, 1818), 443.

[66] G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate; Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia, from the Moslem Conquest to the Time of Timur* (1905. Reprint. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 95.

[67] A. Çevik, 'Ortacağ İslam coğrafyacılarına göre Nusaybin', in *Geçmişten Günümüze Nusaybin, Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. K. Z. Taş (Ankara: Nusaybin Kaymakamlığı, 2009), 65–75, 71.

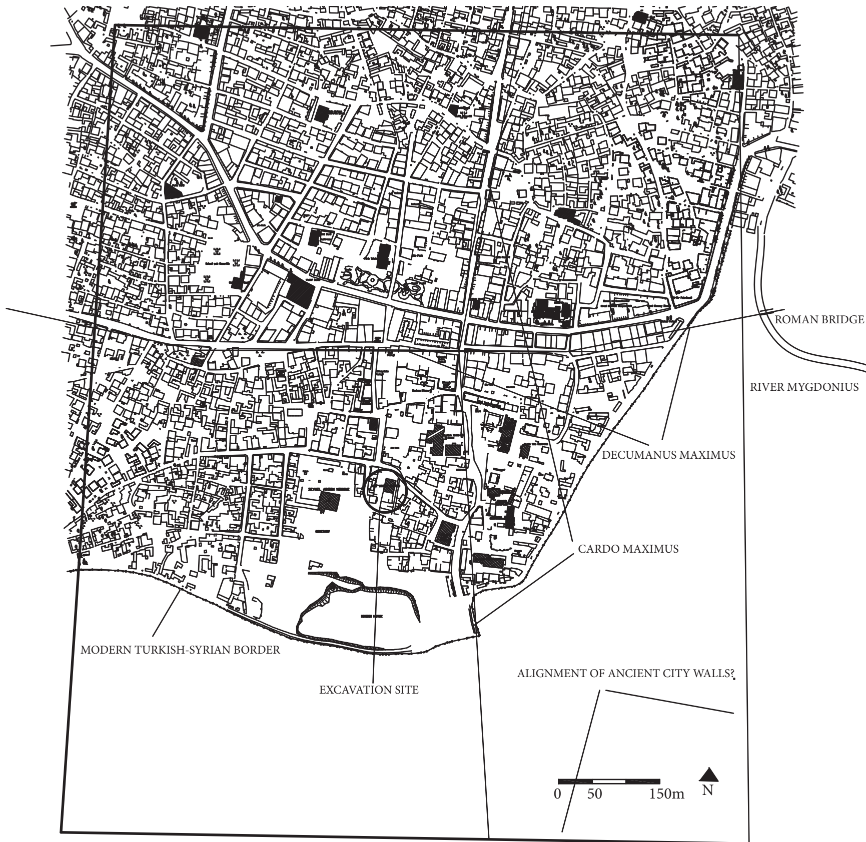

Fig. 2.2.1 Hypothetical suggestion for the city plan of Nisibis

2.2.1 The Baptistery

The only standing building with Late Antique phases in the city is the so-called 'Church of Mor Yaʿqub', part of the episcopal complex of the city.[68] This building is located towards the southern edge of modern Nusaybin, almost in the centre of our reconstructed plan. When the political situation improved in the region, excavations commenced in the vicinity of this structure in 2000 under the supervision of the Diyarbakır Museum. Some photographs of the site and some small finds have been published in a booklet by the Nusaybin Municipality.[69] In

[68] Early baptistery buildings lay adjacent to the cathedrals. R. M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 127–78.
[69] N. Soyukaya and A. Tanhan, *Nusaybin Okulu ve Mor Yakub Kilisesi* (Nusaybin: Nusaybin Belediyesi, 2001).

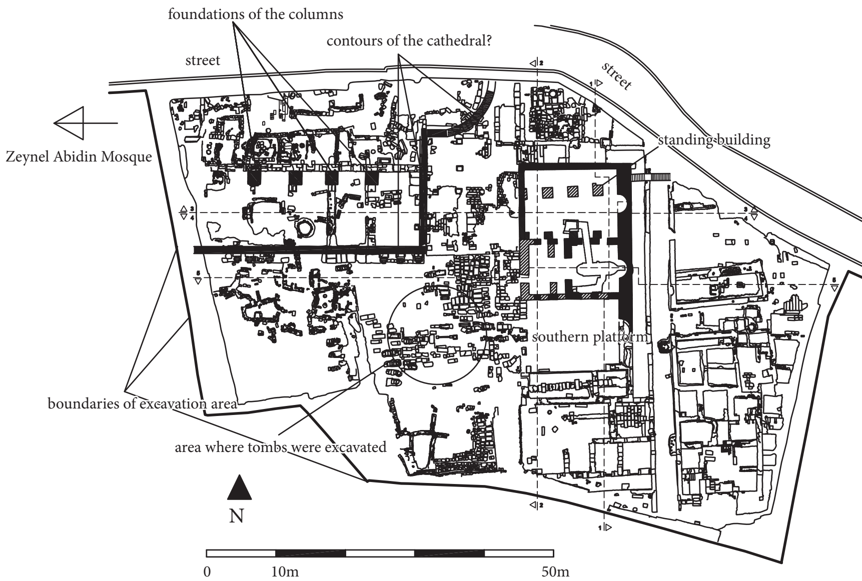

Fig. 2.2.2 Plan of the excavation area
Source: By the author after Zilan Doğan.

2002, the Mardin Museum took over responsibility for the excavations and published a short report about them on the museum's website. In 2007 and 2008, excavations were widened and revealed important material for our understanding of the complex (Fig. 2.2.2).

The standing building, known as Mor Yaʿqub today, is located towards the centre of the large, irregularly shaped excavation area. The uncovering of a 10 metre-wide stone-paved area at floor level in front of the southern façade of the building, and the revealing of a niche/apse at the east end and traces of two doorways at the west end of this paved area, make it possible for us to discuss the building with greater understanding. The standing building is composed of two parts. The southern part is composed of two spaces (east and west) divided by two monumental piers supporting an arch. In the east there is a cubical space, which is around 7 metres wide from wall to wall. This has two doorways in its southern wall and two in its northern wall. There is an apse in the eastern wall (2.64 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep) and, above that, three windows that are now filled in. The main feature of this space is its sculpture. On the interior eastern wall, the sculpture adorns the apse archivolt, then becomes a frieze,[70] and takes the shape of the relieving arches located on top of the doorways in the northern and southern

[70] The frieze takes the following order: fascia, bead and reel, fascia, vine scroll, dentils, egg and leaf, flutes, bead and reel, and acanthus leaves.

walls and the archivolt on the west, surrounding the whole space. There is a narrow cornice in the apse conch. A plain moulding at a higher level, where the walls and the roof meet, runs all around the interior walls.

As mentioned above, two monumental piers divide the southern structure into two areas. The western part of the structure also has two doorways on both its northern and southern walls, but unlike those of the eastern part, which have decorated relieving arches, they are completely undecorated on the interior. The archivolt on the piers rests on Corinthian imposts, but the western parts of the imposts are not decorated (Fig. 2.2.3), indicating the importance of the eastern part. The area to the west of the large piers has two further piers that carry arches, but they are clearly of a much later date. In their reconstructions of the building, Justine Gaborit and Gérard Thébault argued that this part was divided into three parts, and when the building was transformed, the walls dividing this space were demolished.[71] The exteriors of all eight doorways of the central part, both in the northern and the southern walls, are highly decorated (Fig. 2.2.4). The sculpture on the exterior southern wall of the southern structure was uncovered in 2000 when the earth covering the façade up to the friezes linking the relieving arches was removed. The sculpture of the northern façade was already enclosed within the building constructed against it.

Fig. 2.2.3 Interior decoration of the baptistery

[71] J. Gaborit, G. Thébault, and A. Oruç, 'Mar Yaʿqub de Nisibe', in *Les églises en monde syriaque*, ed. F. Briquel-Chatonnet (Paris: Geuthner, 2014), 289–330.

Fig. 2.2.4 Southern façade of the baptistery

The relieving arches of the doorways on the southern façade are slightly horseshoe-shaped and all have the same decoration. In the crown of the doorways, we find a profile similar to that of the relieving arches, though a floral band is added after the top flute and a relatively wider band is added between the two fascias at the bottom. The decoration in the wide band is different on every doorway. The mouldings on the posts and lintels of the four doorways look the same from afar, but are different in detail (Fig. 2.2.5). There are ornaments on the mouldings only at their centre. On all four doorways, the central decoration on the lintels emerges ultimately out of a vase motif at the base. The third and the fourth doorways from the east are distinct from the first two. Their vases from which the decoration stems are at a higher level, indicating that the floor in the west space was built higher than in the east space. There were possibly exterior steps in front of these doors. However, today the floor level inside the building in the western part is actually 0.2 metres lower than that of the east.[72]

On the frieze between the two central doorways of the south façade there is a Greek inscription that identifies the building as a baptistery. Before the removal of the 7 metres of earth in the south of the building, the Greek inscription was just

[72] This confusing picture is the result of many restorations that the building has undergone and alterations to the floor level due to the transformation of the building to a church. For the latter function, a stone platform, which is 0.8 metres higher than the rest of the floor, was also added in front of the apse. The two different floor levels, with the western part being originally higher than the eastern part, fit with the division of the southern structure into two by monumental piers. As described above, the eastern part is highly decorated whereas the western part is void of any decoration.

Fig. 2.2.5 Detail from the sculpture on the doors of the southern façade of the baptistery

above ground level, which has allowed it to be recorded in the past. The inscription reads:

> This baptistery was erected and completed in the year 671 [Seleucid era, i.e. AD 359/360] at the time of Volagesos the bishop, by the effort of the presbyter Akepsymas. May their memorial remain before God.[73]

Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld published the first drawing of the inscription. However, the inscription is not of four lines as shown in their drawing,[74] but arranged in two-and-a-half lines as recorded by Filippo Canali De Rossi.[75] This text clearly identifies the building as a baptistery, making it one of the earliest known inscriptions identifying a building as a baptistery. Although one can see this inscription from ground level, its location and squeezed arrangement make reading impossible. This may indicate that it was carved for recording purposes.[76]

The clearing of the soil from this façade also revealed a Syriac inscription carved on the fascia of the moulding of the post of the second doorway and some Greek graffiti on the inner doorposts of the same doorway. This graffiti remains

[73] C. Mango, personal communication, 2006. For more discussion on the inscription: see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'The Cathedral Complex'.

[74] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 340.

[75] F. Canali de Rossi, *Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente greco: un repertorio* (Bonn: Habelt, 2004), n. 62.

[76] Gaborit and Thébault suggest a late fifth-, early sixth-century date for the sculpture inside the building and think that the inscription commemorates an earlier baptistery, which had the different sculpture that we see on the façade. Gaborit et al., 'Mar Yaʿqub de Nisibe', 328.

unpublished. The Syriac inscription, probably dating to the eighth century, has its letters inscribed vertically and, according to Palmer, mentions a deacon who is qualified to interpret Holy Scripture. Palmer thinks it was carved by a pilgrim.[77] One of the Greek pieces of graffiti reads 'Lord help your servant Leontios'. Others are not clear, but seem to be a series of similar personal invocations.[78]

The sculpture on the northern façade, which, as mentioned earlier, is now the southern wall of the adjoining northern structure, is almost identical to that on the south. The crowns have the same sequence of ornamentation, except in the case of the wide band. The doorposts have vine leaves and trefoils. At first glance, one might think that the sculptural decorations inside the southern structure and on its façades are identical. However, they are not. The main difference is a row of acanthus leaves at the very top of the sculpture inside the building. Apart from that, the decoration on the interior has a vine scroll, which is common in later Christian buildings in the region. While strongly resembling the fifth- and sixth-century sculpture of the region, the decoration inside this building is more delicately carved, enabling us to locate it sometime in the fourth century. On the other hand, the sculpture on the northern and southern façades lacks any parallel in Northern Mesopotamia. It is highly similar, also with its horseshoe-shaped arch, to the spolia in the entrance of the Great Mosque of Hama,[79] which used to be a temple dedicated to Jupiter and was later converted to a church. It is also similar to earlier Roman sculpture in Palmyra or Hatra.[80] Due to these resemblances, theories regarding the existence of an earlier building cannot be ruled out completely until a detailed archaeological excavation in this building is carried out.

In the eastern wall of the southern structure, there are three windows composed of lintels resting on two monolithic uprights, a feature common in fourth-century churches in Syria. Similar upright blocks exist on the eastern façade of the northern structure and on top of the archivolt separating the eastern and western parts of the southern structure. The latter and those on top of the apse of the southern structure are on the same level. Uprights on the eastern wall of the northern structure are only slightly higher than those on the eastern wall of the southern structure. Similar blocks also exist on the southern façade. They are higher than the level of the later dome and about 1 metre higher than those on the eastern façade. This may illustrate the reuse of the blocks in different places. Unlike the northern and southern exterior walls, the eastern wall of the southern structure is devoid of any sculpture on the exterior. However, what is remarkable

[77] Andrew Palmer will publish these inscriptions soon.
[78] C. Mango, personal communication, 2006. Andrew Palmer is currently working also on the Greek inscriptions.
[79] See image 021_DSC_0093.tif under Syria (photographer Ross Burns) in http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/.
[80] Gaborit et al., 'Mar Yaʿqub de Nisibe', 326.

about this wall is its two-tiered arrangement. A projecting wall of about 4.65 metres in height from the floor level of the extant building is built against the eastern wall. This lower tier encompasses the apses of the southern and northern structures, and the southern platform.

Before moving to the northern structure, we should also note what lies above and below the southern structure. There is a crypt under the eastern part. This capsule-like structure is around 6 metres long and 2 metres wide. Its eastern and western ends terminate in semi-circular niches. Parry mentions an inscription in the crypt, but gives no text.[81] There is a marble sarcophagus in the crypt. It is of plain design with a Greek cross at the head and has a gable-roof lid with corner acroteria.[82] The sarcophagus is believed to contain the body of Mor Yaʿqub (d. 338, bishop-saint), who was appointed bishop of the city in 308 and who is credited with the construction of the cathedral of Nisibis (313–320). The crypt, with its elliptical form and manhole, was most probably a cistern.[83] The sarcophagus must have been brought here later.

There are modern additions above the southern structure. The eastern part of the southern structure is covered with a dome dated to 1872 by an inscription.[84] In 1885, a structure was built on top of the dome.[85] The room above the western part, matching the height of the present dome, is contemporary with the dome. Today a Syrian Orthodox family lives in these rooms. The second part of the extant standing building sits to the north of the above-mentioned southern structure and is built against it, using its northern wall. The two doorways in the west wall (one is blocked today, but is easily discernible from the outside) and some parts of the northern wall are clearly earlier than the rest of the structure and contemporary with the southern structure. In terms of both sculpture and size, the apse in the eastern wall (2.7 metres in width and 1.5 metres in depth) is identical to that of the southern structure—indicating that they were built at the same time. This piece of evidence is crucial for our reconstruction below. The piers of the lateral arcade that carry the vault of this structure obscure the fine sculpture on the doorways on the northern wall of the southern structure. Three free-standing piers located off the centre, closer to the northern wall, also carry the vault. One of these pier arches blocks the apse decoration.

[81] Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, 226.

[82] Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler*, 42, pl. 49; J. M. Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours*. CSCO Subsidia 54 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1977), 123.

[83] Gaborit et al., 'Mar Yaʿqub de Nisibe', 308. In many baptisteries we find fonts in the apse fed by a subterranean cistern. See B. Dufay, 'Les baptistères paléochrétiens ruraux de Syrie du Nord', in *Géographie historique du monde mediterranéen*, ed. H. Ahrweiler (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1988), 67–98. In Nisibis, because of the many alterations in the building there is no visible trace of this.

[84] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 339.

[85] G. Akyüz, 'Süryani kaynaklarına göre Nusaybin ve Nusaybin'deki Mor Yakup kilisesi' in *Geçmişten Günümüze Nusaybin, Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. K. Z. Taş (Ankara: Nusaybin Kaymakamlığı, 2006), 231–46, 243.

Judging from their masonry, an eighth-century date can be suggested for the lateral arcades, which seem to be especially common at this time in the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The large stone blocks used in the construction of these piers were probably from an earlier building. This building has been identified with the Church of Mor Yaʿqub built by Bishop Cyprian (741–767) and completed in 758/759 (with construction having commenced in 713).[86] It is not clear when the cathedral, built in 313–320 by Bishop Yaʿqub, was destroyed. This may have happened in 573, when the Christians were temporarily expelled by the Persians, or during the Byzantine/Persian wars in the early seventh century, when Nisibis was an important military base for the Persians, or, alternatively, during the earthquake that devastated the city in 717. In any case, the cathedral was probably no longer standing in 758/759 when Cyprian 'built the conch and the sanctuary of "the great church" of Nisibis, and consecrated it as the Church of Mor Yaʿqub'.[87]

2.2.1.1 Analysis and Reconstructions of the Baptistery

Ristow, who has published the most extensive catalogue of Late Antique baptisteries, includes the Nisibis example in the category of buildings that are not securely dated or identified as a baptistery.[88] Thanks to the recent excavations at the site, we are now in a position to discuss the three earlier reconstructions of the baptistery by Sarre and Herzfeld, André Khatchatrian, Marina Falla Castelfranchi, and a more recent one by Gaborit and Thébault, and to suggest a new one. Sarre and Herzfeld reconstruct the building as having a cubical core with an added porch. They suggest that the roof of the core was a tent-shaped structure and reconstruct the west façade of the porch of the baptistery with two columns carrying an arch and covered with a pitched roof. They consider the northern structure to date from the eighth century and later. However, as described above, the northern structure has parts clearly contemporary with the southern structure.[89]

[86] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 315; Fiey, *Nisibe*, 74–6.

[87] Fiey, *Nisibe*, 74.

[88] S. Ristow, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien* (Münster: Aschendorffesche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998), 7. In recent publications in Turkish there has been no mention of the inscription or the function of the building as a baptistery (e.g. N. Dalkılıç and M. Halifeoğlu, 'Nusaybin'deki kültür varlıklarının değerlendirilmesi ve koruma önerileri', in *Geçmişten Günümüze Nusaybin, Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. K. Z. Taş (Ankara: Nusaybin Kaymakamlığı, 2006), 417–29; G. Akyüz, *Nusaybin'deki Mor Yakup Kilisesi ve Nusaybin okulu* (Mardin: Mardin Kırklar Kilisesi, 1998), 234. In these publications, the history of the structure is described solely as that of a Syrian Christian church. In previous, international scholarship (for a summary of the earlier scholarship and drawings, see Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 143–4) almost no doubt was expressed about the function of the southern structure as a baptistery because of its inscription. The northern structure, on the other hand, has been identified with the Church of Mor Yaʿqub, built by Cyprian in the eighth century, with later additions. The facts that the apse at its east end is identical to the apse in the southern structure, and that it has masonry on the northern and western walls which seems to be contemporary with the southern building, have not been noted.

[89] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 341.

Khatchatrian, on the other hand, basing his argument on the wall fragment that protrudes from the south-east corner, suggests that the cube was originally surrounded by an ambulatory similar to that at the Gülbahçe baptistery near Urla in Izmir. He also associates the Nisibis baptistery with the baptisteries at Gerasa, Side, and Jerusalem, which all had apses at their eastern ends. He traces the historical contexts of the three distinctive features of the baptistery—namely the baldachin, the porch, and the ambulatory. He sees the Nisibis baptistery as a transitional building between the plan types of antiquity and early Christianity. He calls the extant structure a *baldaquin cubique*.[90]

Falla Castelfranchi also employs the piece of wall protruding from the south-east corner as evidence for the existence of adjacent structures. However, her reconstruction does not have an ambulatory, but two large halls flanking the central cubical space. According to her, there were small apses in the eastern walls of these halls.[91] She does not point out the fact that the architectural sculpture on the apse of the northern structure is identical to that of the apse of the southern structure and that they therefore need to be regarded as contemporary. That would be my main argument to support her reconstruction. The discovery of a stone-paved platform under which is a mosaic pavement—of the same length (16 metres) as both the southern and northern structures, and of the same width (9.5 metres) as the northern structure—along with the uncovering of foundations of a niche to the eastern end of this platform—which is of the same dimensions (2.7 metres in width and 1.5 metres in depth) as the apses in the southern and the northern spaces—also supports Falla Castelfranchi's suggestion that the baptistery was a triple-hall structure, with the southernmost of the three halls no longer standing (see Fig. 2.2.7 for a reconstruction).

In the current situation, the free-standing niche at the eastern end of the southern platform brings to mind a *bēth ṣlutho*, or outdoor oratory. This was a common feature in the Syrian Orthodox churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin, mainly after the eighth century.[92] The earthquake that possibly destroyed the cathedral, as mentioned above, must have considerably damaged the baptistery as well. The southernmost structure may have been destroyed then. It is possible that, after being converted to a church in the eighth century, the floor of the southern structure, which was originally covered with mosaics, may have been paved with stones, and the remains of the structure in the east—the apse wall—were used like an outdoor oratory.

The triple-hall arrangement was a common layout in the baptisteries of the East. To cite a few examples: the baptisteries of Qalʿat Semʿan and Zenobia in

[90] A. Khatchatrian, 'Le Baptistère de Nisibis', *Studi di Antichita Cristiana* 22 (1957): 407–21, 411.

[91] M. Falla Castelfranchi, *Baptisteria. Intorno ai piu noti battisteri dell' Oriente* (Rome: Universita di Chieti, 1980), fig. 58.

[92] See the section 3.2.2.5 dedicated to it in Chapter 3, 'Ṭur ʿAbdin'.

Syria,[93] St. Menas in Egypt, Side in Anatolia,[94] Gerasa in Jordan,[95] and some baptisteries in Cyprus.[96] According to Falla Castelfranchi, the baptistery of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (333–336) was the prototype for baptisteries with a triple-hall arrangement. She asserts that the baptistery at Nisibis (359/360) is the oldest example where this influence is seen. There are only about twenty-five years between their construction dates.[97] The claim that an important baptistery, such as the baptistery of the Holy Sepulchre, was a prototype for the tripartite baptisteries mentioned above may seem compelling. However, the textual and archaeological evidence that we have for the baptistery of the Holy Sepulchre is ambiguous.[98]

Sarre and Herzfeld suggest that the crypt under the southern structure dates to the same period as the northern structure (758/759) attached to the baptistery and that the sarcophagus, which had been in the cathedral, was moved to the baptistery at that time.[99] Falla Castelfranchi supports this idea, basing her argument on the inscription's identification of the building as a baptistery, not a martyrium.[100] However, the crypt must have been an original feature of the building. The ancient bricks visible in the vault of the staircase leading to the crypt and the large ashlar blocks of the structure support this notion. Sarre and Herzfeld and Falla Castelfranchi perhaps object to the idea of combining a crypt with a burial and a baptistery, and this has led them to conclude that the crypt must have been added later. However, as Gaborit and Thébault argued, the crypt might have originally been a cistern.[101]

On the other hand, one should not rule out the possibility that the baptistery, which was part of the cathedral complex (with the cathedral itself built between 313 and 320), was designed to hold the body of Mor Yaʿqub (d. 338) from its very beginning. Probably related to the symbolic connection between death and baptism, in the wider Christian world, we can point to examples of baptismal fonts placed in catacombs (such as those of St. Priscilla and Pontianus) and of a

[93] F. De 'Maffei, 'Zenobia e Annoukas: Fortificazioni di Giustiniano sul medio Eufrate. Fasi degli interventi e data', in *Milion, 2, Costantinopoli e l'arte delle province orientali*, ed. F. De Maffei, C. Barsanti, and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi (Roma: Edizioni Rari Nantes, 1990), 135–228, 167–70.

[94] M. Falla Castelfranchi, 'Battisteri e pellegrinaggi', in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie*, ed. E. Dassmann and J. Engemann (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995), 234–48, fig. 2; and for Side: Falla Castelfranchi, *Baptisteria*, pl. 5.

[95] A. Khatchatrian, *Les baptistères paléochrétiens: Plans, notices et bibliographie* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1962), fig. 64, see also fig. 58b in the same book for the baptistery at Qalʿat Semʿan which also has a tripartite arrangement with an octagon in the centre.

[96] A. H. S. Megaw, 'Excavations at the Episcopal Basilica of Kourion in Cyprus in 1974–1975: A Preliminary Report', *DOP* 30 (1976): 345–72, 363.

[97] Falla Castelfranchi, *Baptisteria*, 76.

[98] C. Tinelli, 'II battistero del S. Sepolcro in Gerusalemme', *Liber Annuus* 23 (1973): 95–104. R. G. Ousterhout, 'Rebuilding the Temple: Constantine Monomachus and the Holy Sepulchre', *JSAH* 48/1 (1989): 66–78; A. J. Wharton, 'The Baptistery of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Politics of Sacred Landscape', *DOP* 46 (1992): 313–25, 319.

[99] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 344.

[100] Falla Castelfranchi, *Baptisteria*, 75.

[101] Gaborit et al., 'Mar Yaʿqub de Nisibe', 308.

baptistery connected to a cemetery basilica (near Tarragona). Likewise, tombs were placed in baptisteries. At the Council of Auxerre in 578, burials in baptisteries were prohibited.[102] This shows that this practice must have been employed before that date.

2.2.2 The Cathedral

In 2007 and 2008, the expropriation of the houses just to the north-west of the standing structure (the baptistery) enabled the extension of the excavations further west (around 45 metres, towards the Mosque of Zeynel Abidin) and further north (12 metres towards the street) (Fig. 2.2.6). This extension revealed impressive building foundations. Around 14 metres west of the baptistery, one can see the foundations of the corner of a monumental edifice, built with large blocks of stone. From this corner, the building stretches towards the west and north.

The fragments of six engaged compound piers that constitute the southern façade of the monumental structure have been uncovered. The piers are grouped in two sets of three: one group towards the eastern side and another towards the edge of the excavation area. It is clear that the wall extends further west and the

Fig. 2.2.6 The trefoil piers of the cathedral (looking towards the baptistery)

[102] R. Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 1–33, 28.

engaged piers must have continued to appear in that direction so as to decorate the whole façade. In the north-central area of the excavation site are the foundations of an apse-like structure. Within this zone, fragments of mosaics have been reported. There are large piers around 7 metres north of the monumental blocks behind the engaged piers. These large piers are 3.5–4 metres distant from each other and define the southern aisle of the building. These are probably the foundations of the columns separating the aisles of the structure. The distance between the piers does not allow for a three-aisled reconstruction. There must have been at least another aisle. Thus, the building can be tentatively reconstructed as a five-aisled structure.[103]

In fact, the only known ancient text to mention a physical feature of the cathedral at Nisibis is by John Moschos, who tells a story about a faithful woman and her husband. According to the story, the cathedral of Nisibis had five large doorways ($\pi\mu\lambda\eta$) in a portico.[104] The story implies that the five doors opened out onto the same courtyard, rather than being located on different façades. The five doors may have led to any type of church plan, but a five-aisled arrangement has been tentatively suggested by Cyril Mango.[105]

Judging from the remains, the outline was probably 50 metres by 90 metres. Based on these dimensions, more than half the structure to the west is under the garden of the Zeynel Abidin Mosque and over half of it to the north is under the modern road (for a reconstruction, see Fig. 2.2.7). This monumental building was clearly the cathedral. Basilicas built on such a scale are characteristic of the period after Constantine's conversion, when the form of the basilica was adopted for Christian use.[106] Although five-aisled basilicas continued to be built in the later centuries, the most monumental ones seem to have been built in the fourth century.

We cannot ascertain the date of this five-aisled basilica. According to the eleventh century life of Bishop Yaʿqub of Nisibis (r. 308–338), Yaʿqub built the cathedral of Nisibis between 313 and 320.[107] When compared to the dates of other basilicas in Rome, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, this is a remarkably early date. The

[103] The walls that we see inside the contours of the cathedral are medieval foundations, and these were probably small workshops. Excavations in this area have uncovered a considerable number of medieval pottery sherds.

[104] John Moschus, *The Spiritual Meadow (Pratum spirituale) of John Moschus*, trans. J. Wortley (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 155.

[105] Personal communication, 2006.

[106] J. B. Ward Perkins, 'Constantine and the Origins of the Christian Basilica', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 22 (1954): 69–90. Some of those were five-aisled like the Lateran Basilica (begun in 313) and St. Peter's Basilica (begun in 324) in Rome. Parts of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (333) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (350) were five-aisled basilicas. For the plans of these churches, see Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 13, 17, 30, and 31 respectively. The Hagia Sophia, founded in 360 at Constantinople, seems to have been a five-aisled basilica (Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 107).

[107] Elias of Nisibis, 'Eliae metropolitae Nisibeni, Opus chronologicum', ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, *CSCO* 21/23 (1910): 47–8.

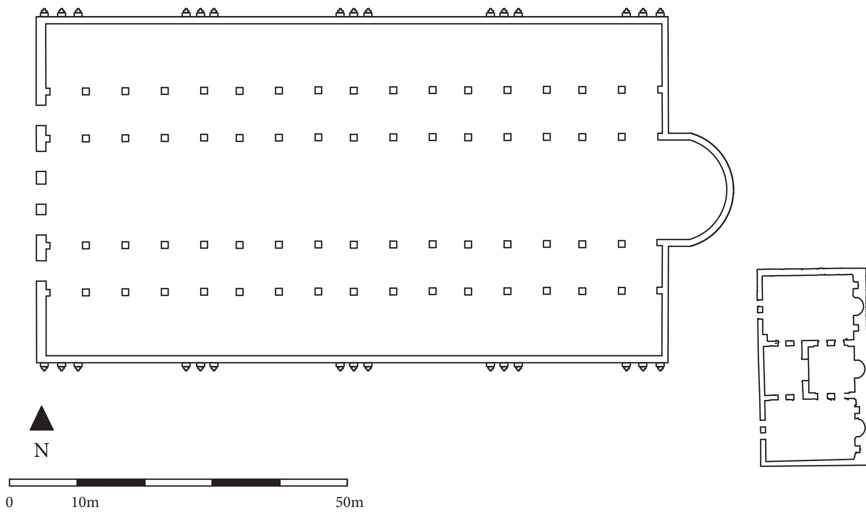

Fig. 2.2.7 Reconstruction of the cathedral and the baptistery

cathedral Yaʿqub built might have been a different, smaller structure, and Volagesos might have also built the five-aisled church that we see the traces of today when he built the baptistery in 359. The huge blocks of stone used for the masonry suggest that parts of the extant standing building, the baptistery, and the recently uncovered cathedral were more or less contemporary.

The five-aisled basilica in Umm Qays (Gadara in Decapolis) is the geographically closest five-aisled basilica dating to the fourth century.[108] In this church, the nave is a square and to the west of the church is a large atrium. While reconstructing the Nisibis basilica, we should not rule out the possibility that it might have had a squarish naos and an atrium, like the basilica in Umm Qays. The basilica in Umm Qays has a crypt, which may have been the case also in the Church of Mor Yaʿqub, as we mentioned above. It is highly likely that in the fourth century, large basilicas built in the Holy Land influenced other important centres. Umm Qays is an example that is geographically in the middle. Five-aisled churches continued to be built in the later centuries, and three-aisled churches were sometimes turned into five-aisled churches,[109] but relevant parallels here are those built on a monumental scale originally with five aisles in the fourth century.

[108] T. Weber, with a contribution by U. Hübner, 'The Excavation of the Five-Aisled Basilica at Umm Qays: A Preliminary Report', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 42 (1998): 443–56.

[109] For example, Abu Mena church complex in Egypt. For its development, see Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, fig. 4.12.

2.2.3 Around Nisibis

The mountain to the east of Nisibis, known as Mount Izla (Izlo), is a prominent region with a concentration of East Syrian monasteries. Apart from the monasteries, there are important fortresses in the territory around Nisibis, such as a Sargathon (Serçehan), Mindous, Rhabdion, and Sisauranon (Sirvan).[110] There are no churches that have survived in these fortresses. However, Sargathon is associated with St. Sergius.[111] Apart from the fortresses, we know the existence of villas in the immediate vicinity of the city.[112]

There are four large monasteries (those of Mar[113]Abraham of Kashkar, Mar Awgin, Mar Yoret, and Mar Yuḥannan Ṭayyaya) on Mount Izla, which are associated with the important figures of early monasticism. Although monasticism in Mesopotamia is linked to Egypt, it is now accepted that the monastic life developed contemporaneously in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt.[114] Two figures stand out in the Syriac monastic tradition: Mar Mari, who was considered to have been one of Christ's seventy disciples, and Mar Awgin (Eugenius), who is thought to be the initiator of monastic life in Syria and Mesopotamia in the fourth century. This dating was based on his life story. However, it is now agreed that Awgin's life story was invented later, and was indebted to the life of Abraham of Kashkar.[115] Similarly, according to his life story, Mar Yoret lived in the third century. Minov says details in the account are anachronistic; some events that it mentions can only have taken place after 363 when the city was under Sasanian rule.[116] These

[110] For details on these fortresses, see Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin'.

[111] In the *Life* of the Persian martyr Gulanducht, we are told that she died in 591 in a sanctuary dedicated to Sergius, which was between Dara and Nisibis. Key Fowden thinks Sercehan (Sargathon) is the place corresponding to the location given in her *Life*. See Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 119–20.

[112] Mentioned in Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 19.9.7, interpreted by J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 387. The country estate of Craugasius, the leading curialis of Nisibis, was located 8 miles away from the city. This estate, where he set up the preparations for his marriage was, according to Matthews, 'not simply a personal residence but a working estate containing a community of country folk'. There are not many known villas in the east of the Empire compared to the west. In Northern Mesopotamia, several settlements present themselves as potential villas, such as Senemağara. Keloşk Kale, near Birecik, is thought to be either a monastery or a *villa rustica* (see Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia' for both). The Halepli Bahçe excavations in Urfa point to a distinct villa with fantastic mosaics.

[113] A long /ā/ replaces the /o/ of 'Mor' in the names of East Syrian saints.

[114] F. Jullien, 'Forms of the Religious Life and Syriac Monasticism', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 88–105, 89.

[115] See F. Jullien, 'Aux sources du monachisme oriental. Abraham de Kashkar et le developpement de la legende de Mar Awgin', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 225/1 (2008): 37–52. For more on the Saint, see Fiey, *Nisibe*, 144–50; L. Van Rompay, 'Abraham of Kashkar', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 8.

[116] S. Minov, 'Jews and Christians in Late Sasanian Nisibis: The Evidence of the Life of Mar Yāreth the Alexandrian', in *Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. J. Rubanovich and G. Herman (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2019), 473–506.

monasteries, with the exception of Mar Yoret, were adopted by the West Syrians in the mid-eighteenth century.[117]

The layouts of these monasteries, although different from each other, show some similarities. They are located on the edges of cliffs overlooking the plain below. They utilize the rock against which they rest, and thus, are composed of rock-cut and masonry structures. They stretch in the east–west direction.[118] The plans have several terraces at different levels (Fig. 2.2.8), and have watchtowers. Unlike the West Syrian monasteries, whose churches have long transverse (i.e. in north–south direction) naves, these monasteries have long hall-type churches (see Fig. 2.2.10 for the plan of the church of the Monastery of Mar Abraham Kashkar). In the rooms flanking the apse, there are ovens. The apse wall is straight, showing similarities with the East Syrian Churches elsewhere.[119] Mar Yuḥannan Ṭayyaya has a domed narthex with reliquaries. In Mar Yoret, the room for the relics is separate from the church. Although these monasteries are significant for their architecture, relation with landscape, inscriptions, and frescoes, most of their

Fig. 2.2.8 Aerial view of the Monastery of Mar Yuḥannan Ṭayyaya
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

[117] Palmer, 'La Montagne Aux LXX Monastères', 175–86.
[118] For a basic sketch of Mar Awgin, see T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* (London: Pindar Press, 1987), vol. 3, 347.
[119] Y. Okada, 'Early Christian Architecture in the Iraqi South-Western Desert', *Al-Rafidan* 12 (1991): 71–83, 81.

Fig. 2.2.9 Aerial view of the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

surviving parts date to the medieval period which is beyond the chronological limits of this book.[120]

Amongst these monasteries, the Monastery of Mar Abraham Kashkar, known as the 'Great Monastery', is of an early date (Fig. 2.2.9). Abraham (d. 588), who made reforms in the monastic life and established rules in 571, is known as 'the Father of the Eastern monks'. According to Barsoum, his monastery was built on an earlier monastery called Beth Gugi or Gugel.[121] The monastery has been described as having communal buildings such as an infirmary, xenodocheion, libraries, and a refectory.[122] Today, the church is surrounded by many buildings but it is difficult to ascertain their functions.

The Church of Mar Abraham has been dated to the sixth century based on its delicate sculpture around its apse (Fig. 2.2.11). Today it is not well preserved but

[120] Monneret de Villard states that the church of the Monastery of Mar Yuḥannan cannot be earlier than the eleventh century: U. Monneret de Villard, *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, trans. A. Özfuruncu (İstanbul: Yaba, 2012), 83. The dome of the narthex of Mar Awgin dates to 1271 (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 141). Mar Yuḥannan is thought to have been founded by monks from Mar Awgin and had strong ties with this monastery for centuries (Palmer, 'La Montagne', 242). For more photographs and current situation, B. Altan, 'Monastery of Mar Yuhannon Tayoyo', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in Tur 'Abdin*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 66–70.

[121] A. Barsoum, *History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, trans. M. Moosa (Pueblo: Paseggiata Press, 2000), 564.

[122] Jullien, 'Forms of the Religious Life'.

it is easy to recognize its deep carving, similar to that of the sixth-century Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ. Loose fragments at the site have ornamentation that can be dated to the eighth century; in particular, those reused around the window frames are similar to eighth-century sculpture in Ṭur ʿAbdin. After the Arab conquest, when the border shifted to the west, the sculptors from Ṭur ʿAbdin might have travelled to this region, which is just to the south. The apse conch of the church is difficult to date. Its arrangement, with small niches topped with shell-shaped conches, was probably similar to the apse decoration of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ (Fig. 3.3.22). A similar conch arrangement is seen also in the Monastery of Yuḥannon d-Kfone in Derikfan (Nurlu),[123] which probably dates to the end of the sixth or mid-seventh century based on the life of its saint.[124] Nothing except the bases of the colonnades and a few fragments randomly reused in the walls of the apse has survived.[125]

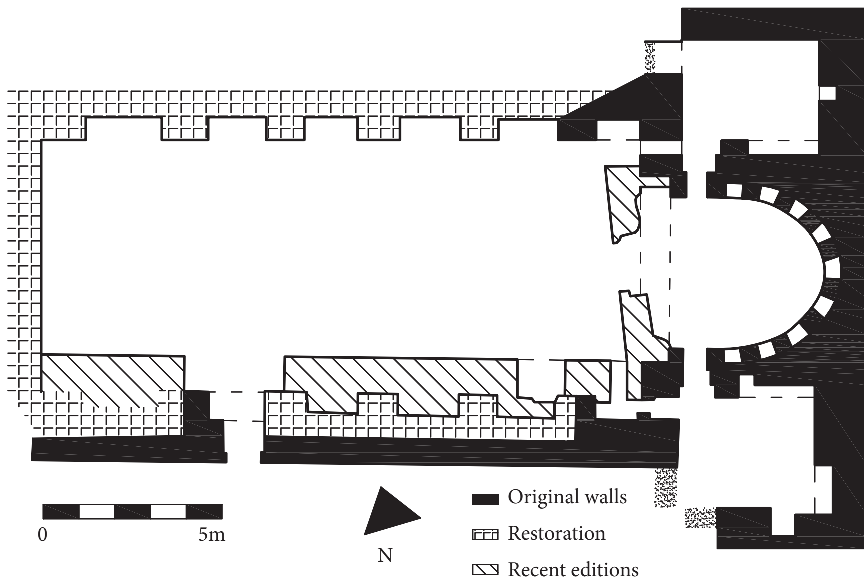

Fig. 2.2.10 Plan of the church of the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar
Source: Redrawn by S. Kayasü after Mundell Mango.

[123] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, I-1, 94–8, fig. 20, I/II, fig. 53–6.
[124] Palmer, 'La Montagne', 101.
[125] For recent photographs, B. Pekol and T. Katrakazis, 'Monastery of Mor Abraham of Kashkar', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in Tur ʿAbdin*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 83–8.

Mundell Mango's analysis of the capitals also points to a sixth-century date. When Mundell Mango visited the monastery in 1979, one of the capitals was *in situ*.[126] The other was standing in the courtyard of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel until recently but has now been removed. These capitals have large naked angels holding wreaths that encircle a cross on one side and an oriental-looking male bust on the other (Fig. 2.2.12). Portraits are common features in Sasanian sculpture, also appearing in column capitals, such as those from Taq-i Bustan.[127] Yet, the capital from Mar Abraham differs, with its wreaths, deeply carved leaves and two-tiered arrangement. It is a good hybrid of Sasanian and classical Northern Mesopotamian features. The parallels we find on the Byzantine side are in the Monastery of Simeon Stylites the Younger,[128] where we find an orans figure and an impost capital with an empress, now in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. We find other similar examples in other parts of the Empire.[129] These capitals are

Fig. 2.2.11 Apse archivolt of the church of the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar

[126] M. Mundell Mango, 'Deux églises de Mésopotamie du Nord: Ambar et Mar Abraham de Kashkar', *CA* 30 (1982): 47–70, fig. 19.

[127] W. Kleiss, 'Die Sasanidischen Kapitelle aus Venderni bei Kamyaran Nördlich Kermanshah', *Archäeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 1 (1968): 143–7, fig. 52.

[128] M. Mundell, 'Monophysite Church Decoration', in *Iconoclasm: Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 58–74, 62.

[129] E. Von Mercklin, *Antike Figuralkapitelle* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962).

Fig. 2.2.12 Capital from the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar

significant given the scarcity of human figures in the sculpture of Northern Mesopotamia. They reflect an interaction with Sasanian art.

2.3 Edessa

In the Syriac sources, Edessa (modern Şanlıurfa) is considered to be the main city in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and the 'capital of Bet Nahrin', that is, Mesopotamia, even though it was not part of the Roman province of Mesopotamia.[130] It was, in fact, the capital of the province of Osrhoene. Although Edessa is regarded as the starting point of the Christianization of Northern Mesopotamia, David Taylor has shown how limited our knowledge is about the ways in which Christianity spread in the region. However, although they have limited historical value,[131] the accounts about the apostles and

[130] Debié, 'The Eastern Provinces', 11–32, 22.

[131] David Taylor discusses these accounts in detail and argues that other cities were equally prominent in the Christianization of the region. He also notes that it was the lay people, deacons, priests, and ascetics rather than kings or apostles who spread Christianity in this region. Taylor, 'The Coming of Christianity', 68–88.

kings—namely the legend of King Abgar's correspondence with Christ[132] and his conversion by Addai; and the city's claim to possess the body of St. Thomas, the relics of Addai, Abgar, and of the martyrs Shmona, Gurya, and Habib[133]—resulted in the creation of a city distinguished for its Christian past.[134] These accounts made Edessa the centre of the kingdom that first accepted Christianity. On account of Jesus' legendary promise that the city will never be conquered, Edessa was called 'the blessed city'. Hence, the name of the main book on the city by Judah Benzion Segal is called *Edessa: The Blessed City*. As very little has survived from Late Antique Edessa, our reconstruction of the churches of the city will also be based mostly on the accounts, and thus shall be hypothetical, although we shall try to contextualize the limited and scattered material evidence.

Philip Wood argues that foundation myths of the city of Edessa created a 'cultural independence' in the fifth century and evolved in the sixth century with the non-Chalcedonian position taken in the region,[135] which is best exemplified by a line in a section of the Chronicle of Zuqnin that is attributed to Joshua the stylite. It states that in the year 502, the Roman General confronted the Persian shah Kawad I, who had laid siege to the city of Edessa, saying: 'You have seen that this city belongs neither to you, nor to Anastasius, but to Christ, who has blessed it.'[136] Some accounts on the city and building of some of its churches, as we shall discuss below, seem to be resulting from an intention of reconciliation between the communities. Reconciliation, however, was not always an aim of the authors writing about the city. Muriel Debié has noted that the tone of treatments of the 525 flood of Edessa and the role of Bishop Asclepios depended on the individual author's confessional stance.[137] In addition to that, Palmer considers the

[132] According to tradition, Jesus sent a letter and a towel, the Mandylion, upon which his portrait was impressed, to Abgar the king of Edessa, who wished to recover from an illness. According to the *Teaching of Addai*, Mandylion was a portrait of Jesus painted by Hannan, Abgar's envoy to Jesus. Later, we find another legendary story, claiming that Jesus sent Abgar the cloth with which he had wiped his face (S. Brock, 'Iconoclasm and the Monophysites', in *Iconoclasm: Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 53–7, 55). See also: H. J. W. Drijvers, 'The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition', in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. H. L. Kessler and G. Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1998), 13–31. The Mandylion was later taken to Constantinople in 944, see A. Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story', *Okeanos, Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute Harvard University, 1983), 80–94, 81. See also S. Brock, 'Transformations of the Edessa Portrait of Christ', *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18/1 (2004): 46–56. The alleged correspondence of Jesus with Abgar was inscribed on a stone on the Harran gate: Segal, *Edessa*, pl. 31b.

[133] Segal, *Edessa*, 65–6, 174–6, 83–6.

[134] Curry lists telling stories as one of the five ways of creating spaces. M. R. Curry, *The Work in the World: Geographical Practice and the Written Word* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 97.

[135] P. Wood, '*We have no king but Christ*', *Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400–585)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[136] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 61 (79).

[137] For those writings, see M. Debié, 'Réparer les brèches: Monuments littéraires et théologie politique dans les villes syriaques des frontières', in *Reconstruire les villes: Modes, motifs et récits*, ed. E. Capet et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 245–6.

Chronicle of Edessa, as a kind of petition for imperial attention and argues that Justinian did not intervene at Edessa just after the flood as Procopius claims.[138]

In terms of archaeological evidence, little remains of Late Antique Edessa apart from sections of circuit walls, the temenos walls (which stand beside what was probably the north–south cardo), traces of various structures on the acropolis, rock-cut tombs, and *spolia* used in the mosques of the city. Third-century mosaics from the city do in fact show that the region was culturally different even before Christianity was firmly established. The mosaics show a mixture of Hellenistic and Semitic cultures.[139] Although it is today a busy urban centre, there have been some exciting discoveries in the city, which include a villa with extensive floor mosaics (Haleplibahçe)[140] that are now displayed under a protective dome near the new museum of the city. These sixth-century mosaics, which are pagan in their themes and classical in character, show how well connected Edessa was with other centres.[141] In addition, after the expropriation of six hundred houses, between 2012 and 2017, seventy-five rock-cut burial chambers were excavated in the Kızılkoyun necropolis, and seventy-six on the flanks of the hill (Kale Eteği) on which the citadel is located. Some have Syriac, some have Greek and some others have bilingual inscriptions.[142] The example illustrated in Fig. 2.3.1 has been dated to the fifth–sixth centuries.[143] Some others, which have floor mosaics with Syriac inscriptions and crosses, have been dated to the fourth century.[144] We have a relative abundance of textual material in Syriac from the city, but the paucity of Syriac inscriptions had been considered puzzling.[145] The recent discoveries of Syriac inscriptions are important in that respect.

The citadel mount, the river, the springs, and the pools were prominent features of the city. The city plan was superimposed on these natural features. One can still follow the traces of orthogonal city planning.[146] The defences probably consisted of both an inner and an outer wall. The Byzantines enlarged the circuit of Edessa's walls to include the whole of the mount, which was partly included within the walls in Seleucid times. The two columns on the mount with Corinthian capitals are Abgarid. Public buildings, open spaces, temples, and Hellenistic-era walls of

[138] A. Palmer, 'Procopius and Edessa', *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000): 127–36. See this publication also for a record of the floods in Edessa mentioned in the chronicles.

[139] J. Balty and F. Briquel Chatonnet, 'Nouvelles Mosaiques Inscraites D'Osrhoene', *Monuments et Mémoires* 79 (2000): 31–72.

[140] Karabulut, Önal, and Dervişoğlu, *Haleplibahçe Mozaikleri.*

[141] Similarities with mosaics in Antioch and Constantinople should be noted. M. Önal, *Urfa-Edessa Mozaikleri* (Şanlıurfa: Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2017), 111–12.

[142] Çetin, et al, 'New Inscriptions,'121, 123, and 131.

[143] Önal, *Urfa-Edessa Mozaikleri*, 122.

[144] Önal, *Urfa-Edessa Mozaikleri*, 120, 137.

[145] F. Briquel Chatonnet and A. Desreumax, 'Syriac Inscriptions in Syria', *Hugoye* 14/1 (2011): 27–44.

[146] P. Pinon, 'Survivances et transformations dans la topographie d'Antioche après l'Antiquité', in *Topoi. Orient-Occident*, Supplément 5 (2004): 191–219, 203.

Fig. 2.3.1 Rock-carved burial chamber with a fresco
Source: Courtesy of Mehmet Önal.

the first city have been noted.[147] On the city's north-west side stood the hippodrome[148] and on the eastern side near the outlet of the river was a theatre. Joshua the Stylite mentions summer and winter baths, inns, colonnades, stoas, and the antiforos that must have stood next to the forum. Other buildings include a town hall, hospices, infirmaries, and the government granary. Aqueducts from Tell Zema and Mawdud brought water to the city from twenty-five springs. The city is claimed to have had a statue of Constantine holding a cross.[149]

The River Daisan (Scirtus, modern Karakoyun River), which flows from west to east, caused calamities for the city's inhabitants. It originally flowed through the city by means of gates; its course was redirected by Justinian's architects to skirt the walls. Justinian built a dam on the north-west of the city, conducting the river by an artificial channel outside the north and east walls of the city. Other works attributed to Justinian by Procopius are the restoration of the ruined parts of the city, including the church and the structure called the antiforos, the rebuilding of the main wall of Edessa and its outer works, and the building of another wall on

[147] S. K. Ross, *Roman Edessa: Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114–242 C.E.* (London: Routledge, 2001), 102, 110.
[148] Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 2.12; Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.7.9–15.
[149] Trombley and Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, 27, 43, 87.

the crest of the hill.[150] Like Dara and Amida, Edessa had riverside porticoes.[151] The pools were important features of the city and the prominent buildings were located close to them as is also the case today.

In his article about the antiforos at Constantinople, which he suggested was a market for provisions, Mango introduces the courtyard of the great Mosque at Edessa as a possible candidate for the antiforos at Edessa, mentioned in ancient sources.[152] The courtyard of the Great Mosque (69 metres x 64 metres) seems to follow the lines of an earlier foundation. It has Late Antique masonry surviving in the west wall, as well as profiled doorways in the north and east walls. The latter has a medallion on its lintel that is hard to see because of the door added in front of it. There are about fifteen column capitals scattered in this courtyard, and there are also a few courses of ancient masonry in the minaret of the mosque. In 1979, the then director of the Şanlıurfa Museum, Osman Öçmen, and his then assistant Cihat Kürkçüoğlu, made a partial excavation by the south wall of the Great Mosque. They found a subterranean space, suggesting that the mosque lies over an ancient building.[153] Today, local people think that the church that may have stood there was called 'Kızıl kilise', that is, 'red church', mainly because of the existence of four red columns reused inside the mosque.

In the courtyard of the Great Mosque, there is a significant group of free-standing Corinthian capitals with uncut acanthus[154] leaves. Gunnar Brands, who explored the Northern Mesopotamian sculpture in relation to Resafa, thinks these capitals are similar to those of Basilica B at Resafa.[155] However, when the whole range of capitals with uncut acanthus leaves in Northern Mesopotamia is considered, one can find hardly any parallels to the capitals at Edessa. They are much bigger (around 0.9 x 0.9 x 0.70 metre). They have abstracted volutes in the corners, and the egg-and-leaf motif between the volutes of the composite capital is replaced with different motifs (repeating triangles, guilloche, and circle and diamond shapes). (See Fig. 2.3.2 for wind-blown acanthus, uncut acanthus, and composite-type capitals from Edessa.)

In several others, the space between the central side leaves and the volutes is covered with flutes or shallowly carved leaves. It is difficult to assign a specific date to these capitals. Apart from these, there are four wind-blown acanthus capitals

[150] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2. 7.1–14. According to Wilkinson, this was not the genius of Justinian; the system was already in use before him but he just improved an existing ditch. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1981). Palmer also questions Justinian's activities: A. Palmer, 'Procopius and Edessa', 127–36.

[151] M. Mundell Mango, 'The Porticoed Street at Constantinople', in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 29–51, 43–6.

[152] Mango, 'Le Terme Antiforos', 317–28. Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 42–3 and Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2, 7, 6 mention the antiforos.

[153] Personal communication with Cihat Kürkçüoğlu from Harran University, Şanlıurfa in July 2006.

[154] Also called smooth or uncarved acanthus.

[155] G. Brands, *Die Bauornamentik von Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Mainz: P. Von Zabern, 2002), 240.

Fig. 2.3.2 Column capitals from Edessa: a, b, c from Şanlıurfa Museum; d from the Great Mosque

displayed in the Şanlıurfa Museum. The most significant architectural fragments in the Şanlıurfa Museum are the decorated column shafts, excavated at the Great Mosque of Harran. It has been argued that they come from an even earlier building, probably the early cathedral at Edessa.[156] There are four fragments of these shafts in the Şanlıurfa Museum. There are also reused shafts in the Great Mosque of Şanlıurfa (Fig. 2.3.3).

Our knowledge of baptisteries, churches, and monasteries, in and near Edessa, comes mainly from texts.[157] The Chronicle of 1234 is probably the most detailed account about the churches of Edessa, even describing the location of some of the churches. Some hypothetical maps have been produced based on the accounts.[158]

[156] M. Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition in the Art and Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia', in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. G. Garsoian et al. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center, 1982), 119–20. The shafts bear designs that are similar in technique to the vine scrolls at Nisibis, which were interpreted as having been executed with a Palmyrene style.

[157] Especially from Chronicle of Edessa (written *c.*550): 'The Chronicle of Edessa', trans. B. H. Cowper, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 5 (1864): 28–45; Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Chronicle 512; and Chronicle of 1234, *Anonymi auctoris chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, ed. J. B. Chabot, *CSCO* 81–2 (1916–20) and trans. J. B. Chabot, *CSCO* 109 (1937).

[158] Guidetti, 'The Byzantine Heritage', 1–36; 25, 26, plans 1 and 2; E. Kirsten, 'Edessa—Eine Romische'; Segal, *Edessa*, 261, 263; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, 20, 21.

Fig. 2.3.3 Column shafts from Edessa: (a) from Şanlıurfa Museum; (b) from the Great Mosque

Figure 2.3.4 is based on those, including only churches. According to Segal, there was a division of the churches of Edessa mentioned in the Chronicle of 1234. He hypothetically suggests that the churches mentioned in chapter 43 of the chronicle, such as the Church of Theodore, the Church of Cyriacus, and probably the bishop's monastery of the Mother of God (Yoldath Aloho), were monophysite churches, whereas those listed in chapter 44 of the same chronicle, such as the church of the Cross, the two churches dedicated to the Mother of God, and the churches dedicated to the martyr George and Archangel Michael were Chalcedonian.[159]

In addition, Segal thought that some of the churches inside Edessa were in proximity to the churches outside the walls that had the same dedication. That is to say, the church dedicated to the martyrs Shmona, Gurya, and Ḥabbib was in the northern quarter of the city and the church with the same dedication outside the city was to the north of the city. Segal suggests that this could be a kind of pattern in church building and thus speculates

[159] Segal, *Edessa*, 190. It is difficult to assess the effects of the Christological controversy on the architecture and urban planning, and to determine who built what and who owned what, since the bishoprics were changing hands between miaphysite and Chalcedonian bishops. His hypothesis may be depending on the date of the churches and the confessions of the bishops.

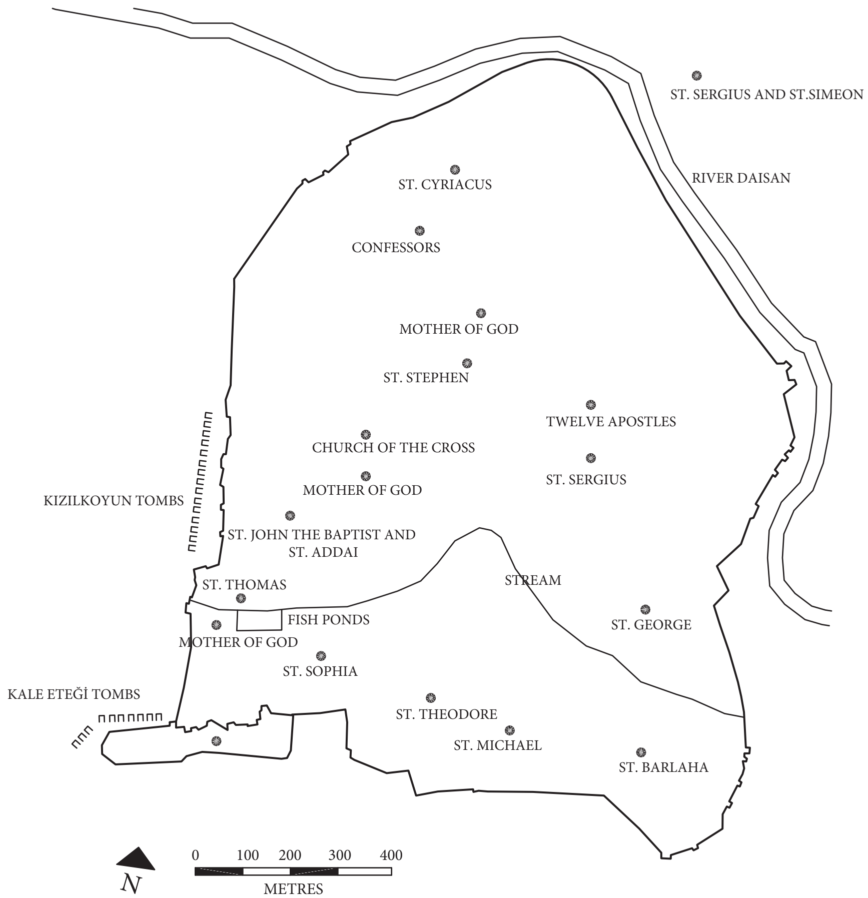

Fig. 2.3.4 Hypothetical location of the churches of Edessa
Source: By the author after Segal and Kirsten.

that since the Church of St. Thomas was in the south-east quarter of the city, the martyrium from which his relics were transferred may have been outside the city, to the south-east.[160]

[160] Segal, *Edessa*, 174–5. At Edessa, having churches with the same dedication both inside and outside the city was probably a result of the transfer of the relics, which had been stored outside, to places within the city walls because of the continuous attacks on the city. In the war of 502, all the monasteries and inns near the fortifications were demolished, the villages were burned and the hedges in the orchards were cut down. Martyrs' relics and silver vessels were brought in from the rural chapels (Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Chronicle, 59).

Our information about the individual religious buildings also comes from texts. Of the baptisteries, it has been recorded that in 369, Bishop Barsai built the Great baptistery of Edessa.[161] Later, Nonnus who became the bishop of Edessa in 457, built many buildings as well as a baptistery. Segal suggested that the latter baptistery was located under the current Halil Rahman Cami (Yeşil Kilise).[162] In the early eighth century, Athanasius bar Gumoye of Edessa allegedly renovated the glorious temple of the Mother of God in Edessa and another splendid building, to be a baptistery. For this building he built reinforced canals of water, exactly as bishop Amazonius had done in the great and ancient church of Edessa. He also covered its walls with marble and adorned it with gold and silver.[163] Given that the region was then under Arab rule, the account of the baptistery that Athanasius built was probably a fabrication of later chroniclers to show the tolerance of the early Muslim rulers. This probably resulted from the opposition against building in the later centuries of Islam, as will be discussed more in the Epilogue of this book. The similarity of the description of the decoration of the baptistery to the description of the decoration in Hagia Sophia, in a sixth-century *sogitha* (hymn) written by a Chalcedonian (mentioned below in Section 2.3.1, 'Hagia Sophia') is also remarkable. On the other hand, Athanasius bar Gumoye was an influential figure, just as we find the mention of powerful Christian elites under early Islamic rule, elsewhere in the region.[164]

The Chronicle of Edessa records that the floods of 201 destroyed the sanctuary of the church of the Christians.[165] This church may have been a house church, similar to that at Dura.[166] One cannot say for certain whether this building really existed. It was most probably a part of the invented history that we mentioned above. The first church built in Edessa after the flood of 201 was called the Church of Edessa whose foundations were claimed to have been laid by Bishop Qona (289–313) in 312/3. His successor Saʿad completed the building. Apparently another church, probably the Church of St. Thomas, became the cathedral of the city before 437/8 when a great table of silver was put in 'the old church of Edessa'.[167] Local tradition, with which Segal seems to agree, locates the Church of St. Stephen around the Great Mosque, where the surviving Late Antique remains in Edessa are concentrated. The argument is probably based

[161] Chronicle of Edessa, 29. [162] Segal, *Edessa*, 213.

[163] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 11, ch. 23. He is also recorded to have owned four thousand slaves as well as villages, shops, houses, gardens, gold, silver, and precious gems. Palmer et al., *The Seventh Century*, 202–4, citing the work of Patriarch Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē as reconstituted from Patriarch Michael the Great's chronography.

[164] See more in Chapter 4, the Epilogue of this book.

[165] Chronicle of Edessa, 8. *hayklo* of the ʿ*idto*.

[166] F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 475.

[167] Chronicle of Edessa, 12, 60. Presumably, the 'old church' referred to here is the church built by Qona. This church was probably destroyed in an earthquake in 678, in which also Batnae da-Sarug collapsed. Palmer et al., *The Seventh Century*, 81–2.

on the central location of the mosque, since the Church of St. Stephen (converted from a synagogue) was described as being located in the middle of the city.[168] However, we do not know whether that church was the cathedral.

There are some indications that the Church of St. Thomas was the cathedral of the city. We know that the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria usually went straight to the cathedral of the city she was visiting to meet the bishop first,[169] and there is no mention of another principal church at Edessa in her diary. While there is no mention of a church in Edessa dedicated to St. Thomas in the *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, previous scholars have assumed that a major church of the city, mentioned without its dedication, is indeed the Church of St. Thomas.[170]

The writings of Jacob of Edessa (*c.*640–708), who is considered 'the most prominent monophysite scholar of the early medieval period',[171] show us that the Muslim presence started to be felt in Edessa by the 690s. While Jacob denounces the Muslim oppression, other records mention the rebuilding of the Church of Edessa by Muawiya after an earthquake in 670.[172] Most of the churches of Edessa survived until the medieval period.[173] Up until the tenth century, Muslim and Christian writers mentioned the strength of Christianity in Edessa and the numerousness and beauty of its churches and monasteries.[174] No archaeological remains survive to suggest what the churches of Edessa looked like. Based on the indications mentioned in the texts, one can assume that some

[168] Chronicle of Edessa, 51.

[169] Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 224, fn. 2. During her visit, Egeria went to 'the church and martyrium of St. Thomas' (*ad ecclesiam et ad martyrium sancti Thomae*). Egeria described the church she visited as 'a large and beautiful church constructed in a new shape and truly worthy to be the house of God'. Egeria, *Itinerarium*, 19.2. As early as the time when Egeria went to Edessa (between 382 and 386), the cult of Thomas was popular in Edessa. 'In a new shape' stands here for *noua dispositione*. The same English words were chosen by both Segal and Wilkinson in their translations. According to Wilkinson, at these dates there was not yet any standard plan for a church building and consequently she may have found the arrangement of the church unfamiliar. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 224. Gingras translated *noua dispositione* as 'of recent design', while Bludau suggested that *noua dispositione* refers to a new structure (probably in a new location). G. E. Gingras, *Diary of a Pilgrimage, Egeria* (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 205, fn. 206. A. Bludau, *Die Pilgerreise der Aetheria* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1927). Egeria, having visited Constantinople, Jerusalem, Egypt, Nazareth, Sycthopolis, and Mount Sinai, may not have meant that the church was built in an unfamiliar shape, but she was rather referring to a new place. About a decade after her visit, in 393/4, the body of Thomas was transferred from the martyrium outside the city to 'his holy temple' (Chronicle of Edessa, 38). This account may also indicate that a new church in a new location was built.

[170] W. Wright, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, Composed in Syriac A.D. 507* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 22.

[171] A. Salvesen, '"Christ Has Subjected Us to the Harsh Yoke of the Arabs": The Syriac Exegesis of Jacob of Edessa in the New World Order', in *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient*, ed. G. Tamer et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 145–61.

[172] For more on Edessa during the time of Jacob, see R. Hoyland, 'Jacob and Early Islamic Edessa', in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, ed. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 11–24.

[173] Guidetti, 'The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām', 26, 28.

[174] Hoyland, 'Jacob and Early Islamic Edessa', 14.

churches in Edessa were basilicas. The Church of St. Thomas was one of them. It had a northern aisle whose western end received the coffin of the Apostle.[175] Assuming they were the same, Joshua the Stylite's account of the church stating that the virtuous priest Aedesius encrusted the doors of the men's aisle (men's house) in the (City) Church of Edessa with brass[176] is another indication that this church was an aisled basilica. Similarly, the Church of Confessors, built in 345/6, was probably a basilica since we are told that Kawad I destroyed 'the northern basilica of the House of Confessors'.[177] 'The northern basilica' here probably indicates the north aisle of the church. The Church of St. John the Baptist, built by Nonnus when he became bishop in 457/8, had wonderful columns of red marble.[178] Segal gives the number of columns as thirty-two, which may be reconstructed as a three or a five-aisled church.[179] We do not have a clue about the architecture of the remaining churches. On the other hand, one particular church deserves further attention.

2.3.1 Hagia Sophia

The most famous of all the churches in Edessa was no doubt the Hagia Sophia. Muslim writers regarded it as one of the world's greatest marvels, and listed it amongst the majestic monuments of the time together with al-Aqsa mosque and the great mosque of Damascus.[180] The church was destroyed in 1031 and completely demolished by 1174 or 1184.[181] It has been suggested that fragments from this church were reused in the Great Mosque of Harran and in the citadel of Edessa.[182] The four finely carved column shafts in the Şanlıurfa Museum (Fig. 2.3.3a), which were reused in the Great Mosque of Harran, may have come from this church.[183]

Our information about Hagia Sophia at Edessa comes mainly from a Syriac *sogitha*. This mid-sixth-century hymn was sung on the occasion of the dedication

[175] Chronicle of 1234, 180. [176] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Chronicle, 89.
[177] Chronicle of Edessa, 81. [178] Chronicle of 1234, 180, l.21.
[179] Segal, *Edessa*, 184. When one considers the proportions of basilicas in general, the number of the columns suggests a five-aisled basilica that had eight columns in each arcade separating the aisles. However, a three-aisled basilica with sixteen columns in each row is also a possible reconstruction. For example, the basilica outside the walls of Dibsi Faraj (38.5 metres long), which is not very far from Edessa, has thirteen columns in each row. The fifth-century basilica of El Hosn by Kapro Pera (about 42 metres excluding the apse) in Syria is a three-aisled basilica which has eighteen columns in each of the arcades separating the nave and the aisles, see G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1953), plate XII.1. Given that most of the five-aisled basilicas date earlier, it is more likely that the Church of St. John the Baptist was a three-aisled basilica.
[180] Guidetti, 'The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām', 8.
[181] E. McVey, 'The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol', *DOP* 37 (1983): 91–121, 106. Guidetti, 'The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām', 12.
[182] Segal, *Edessa*, 256. [183] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 121.

of the church.[184] The description of the building in the hymn can be included in the tradition of *ekphrasis*,[185] an important literary genre in Byzantium that had an ancient tradition. Architectural *ekphraseis* are especially impressive and do not necessarily follow rigid conventions. Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino note: 'There is no reason at all to doubt that such descriptions were based on observation, and that when they waxed lyrical on the opulence of the building materials, they were recording a real and desired effect.'[186] They identified four legs that formed an *ekphrasis*: objective description, literary form, historical context, and occasional context. Thus, these texts are often more than a personal response to the experience of architecture. However, although its historical and occasional significance should not be ignored, it has also been stated that 'the search for a particular context is futile, and that we should read ekphrastic texts, just as we are now being urged to read works of art, without attempting to invest them with a topicality that they do not themselves acknowledge'.[187] With these in mind, we shall try to deduct as much information as possible from the hymn about the architecture of the church.

Given Justinian's efforts to reconcile religious factions and his patronage in Northern Mesopotamia, it is tempting to search for a context for this Syriac hymn on the Hagia Sophia in Edessa written by the Chalcedonian bishop of the city. Kathleen McVey argues that the hymn draws from the scriptural tradition of Jacob of Sarug, who was a prolific miaphysite author. According to her, this, amongst other things, may be a result of using the hymn as a 'subtle means of reconciling the substantial Monophysite populace of Edessa to the Chalcedonian bishop'.[188]

The *Sogitha* does not give any historical information for the Church of Hagia Sophia except to say in the second strophe that 'Bezalel constructed the Tabernacle for us with the model he learned from Moses, and Amadonius and Asaph and Addai built a glorious temple for You in Urhay.' It has been suggested that Amadonius, mentioned in the hymn, was the Chalcedonian bishop of the time and Asaph and Addai were the architects.[189] This suggestion

[184] For various editions of this anonymous Syriac hymn, see the bibliography in A. Palmer with an appendix by L. Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: A New Edition and Translation with Historical and Architectural Notes and a Comparison with a Contemporary Constantinopolitan Kontakion', *BMGS* 12 (1988): 117–67; McVey, 'The Domed Church'.

[185] Described as 'Evocative writing, often in the form of a description of a work of art or architecture' in R. G. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 33–8.

[186] R. Macrides and P. Magdalino, 'The Architecture of Ekphrasis: construction and context of Paul the Silentiary's poem on Hagia Sophia', *BMGS* 12 (1988): 47–82, 51.

[187] Macrides and Magdalino, 'The Architecture of Ekphrasis', 81–2.

[188] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 118.

[189] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 98; C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 58.

is widely accepted. However, Palmer's argument that Asaph might be a corruption of Asqleph (bishop of Edessa at the time of flood), and that all three were bishops, is convincing.[190] Procopius tells us that after the great flood of 525 in Edessa, the emperor Justinian 'immediately' restored all the ruined parts of the city, including the church of the Christians.[191] It is not clear whether the church mentioned by Procopius was the Church of St. Sophia. Centuries later, Masʿūdi (d. 956), who considered the church to be one of the wonders of the world, states that it was built by the emperor Justinian.[192] Justin was emperor immediately after the flood but it should be noted that Procopius enumerates the works done under the reign of the emperor Justin as works of the emperor Justinian. Thus, the construction of the church may have started soon after the flood of 525 and completed when Amadonius was the bishop (probably 540–554), as he rebuilt and ornamented the church.[193] The poet's words in Strophe 4: 'for it truly is a wonder that its smallness is like the wide world, not in size but in type; like the sea, waters surround it' were interpreted as describing the location of the church between streams. This is probably where the modern fish ponds are today. It probably stood in the same place as the church which Qona built in 312.[194]

As for the plan of the church, various translations and the interpretations of the translations of the hymn have resulted in different reconstructions. Alfons Maria Schneider reconstructed it as cruciform shaped with a central dome and with vaulted ceilings in the arms of the cross.[195] André Grabar, on the other hand, argued for a cross-domed church. He suggested that the exterior walls supported the dome, which covered the entire church. He thought St. Clement at Ankara was the closest parallel to the cathedral at Edessa in terms of vaulting.[196] Lyn Rodley found a domed basilica more likely, although she mentioned other alternatives.[197] Krautheimer thought it was a 'domed cross enclosed in a square and resting on the walls of corner chambers', similar to Hosios David in Thessaloniki (late fifth century).[198] Jonathan Bardill suggested an aisled-tetraconch similar to those at Seleucia-Pieria, Apamea, and Bostra as a possibility,[199] while neglecting to mention the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. It is tempting to argue that the two neighbouring provincial capitals of the region (of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia) had major churches with the same layout.

[190] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 128.
[191] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.7.6. [192] Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 104.
[193] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 9, ch. 29; book 11, ch. 27.
[194] Chronicle of Edessa, 12; Segal, *Edessa*, 189.
[195] A. M. Schneider, 'Die Kathedrale von Edessa', *OC* 3/14 (1941): 161–7, 165.
[196] A. Grabar, 'Le témoignage d'un hymne syriaque sur l'architecture de la cathédrale d'Edesse au VIème siècle et sur la symbolique de l'édifice chrétien', *CA* 2 (1947): 41–67, 48.
[197] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 165.
[198] Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 240.
[199] J. Bardill, 'The Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople and the Monophysite Refugees', *DOP* 54 (2000): 1–11, 9, fn. 63.

The suggested layouts cover a wide variety. I shall not go through each reconstruction. Instead, I shall try to understand the building based on previous translations and our own reading of the hymn.[200] That the church had a dome without columns is a straightforward conclusion from the fifth and tenth strophes of the hymn: 'Behold! Its ceiling is stretched out like the sky and without columns [it is] arched and simple' and: 'There is no wood at all in its ceiling, which is as if entirely cast from stone'.[201] The dome was most probably of brick, like the dome of St. Sophia at Constantinople, which would have looked like stone once it was plastered. The word *pšyṭ* translated as 'simple' by McVey, can also mean 'erect', 'upright', and most probably means, in this case, 'high'.[202] The dome symbolized 'the heavenly shelter' and 'the domical cosmic house of God'.[203] The Syriac hymn on the cathedral of Edessa is the first literary evidence of the notion of the 'dome of heaven'[204] which was popular amongst Christians by the sixth century.

The structure surrounding the dome of St. Sophia at Edessa is not easy to reconstruct. The seventh strophe was translated by McVey as: 'The splendour of its broad arches—they portray the four ends of the earth. They resemble also by the variety of their colours the glorious rainbow.' Palmer reads the first half of the same strophe as: 'Gleaming and broad, the conches represent the four quarters of the world.' The word *kp'* translated as arches in McVey's translation, and as conches in Palmer's translation, refers to anything hollow or curved in Syriac. Thus, it can mean both a conch and an arch depending on the context. However, given the broadness of these curved elements and their likening to a rainbow, one is made to think that the poet was describing the four archivolts or vaults surrounding the dome on the four sides. The translation of Palmer as conches led Rodley to suggest a reconstruction similar to St. Sergius and St. Bachus, with conches on the corners.[205]

The succeeding strophe is crucial for understanding the overall form of the ceiling. 'Other arches surround it like crags jutting out from a mountain, upon, by and through which its entire ceiling is fastened on the vaults.'[206] Palmer's translation is: 'Encircling the base of the dome are other vaults, which curve inwards like overhanging crags; thus vault supports vault by means of a vault between,

[200] I would like to thank David Taylor and fellow students in the Syriac reading group for reading the text with me.

[201] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 95.

[202] Palmer's translation is: 'Just look at the ceiling, stretched out like the sky, its concave expanse unsupported by columns' where pšyṭ is being translated as 'expanse'. Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 131.

[203] E. B. Smith, *The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 79.

[204] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 91.

[205] Although she does not mention it, it has been hypothetically suggested in the past that this church had been built for the use of the Monophysite refugees in Constantinople. For a summary of the scholarship on the matter and Bardill's ideas: Bardill, 'Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus'.

[206] McVey, 'The Domed Church'.

which binds together the whole structure of the roof.'[207] The word used for arches is again *kp'* which, as already mentioned, normally means curved surface and was used for the vaults above. The description 'upon, by and through' fits well with the function of a squinch or a pendentive, both of which are used to make the transition from the circular section of the dome to the supporting structure, square in plan, standing below. In earlier translations, these were interpreted as squinches.[208] However, they could also be pendentives. The word *'zg'* translated as vault in the second part of the strophe is normally used for an arch. Thus, it most probably refers to the arches surrounding the central dome, joining the barrel vaults of the sides and the central dome.

The eleventh strophe is the most crucial for the reconstruction of the church. McVey's translation reads: 'It is surrounded by magnificent courts (*drt'*) with two porticoes (*'sṭw'*) composed of columns (*'sṭwn'*). Which portray the tribes of Israelites who surrounded the (temporal) Tabernacle.'[209] Palmer's reading is completely different: 'Around the dome are the Courts of Praise: two porticos, one mounted on the pillars of the other; just so the Tribes of Israel used to stand around the Tabernacle.' 'On the pillars of the other' is Palmer's interpretation. Based on this interpretation, Rodley suggested that galleries surrounded the central space, as in the cases of St. Sophia and St. Irene at Constantinople.[210]

If there had been galleries, they would probably have been overlooking the central space and thus would be the part of the structure carrying the dome, which was mentioned in the previous strophes, but there is no mention of galleries. *'sṭw'* has been translated as portico, and thus interpreted as a feature having four sides. If we translate it as stoa, we may interpret it as rows of columns flanking the church. Literally translated, what the magnificent courts or the Courts of Praise were surrounding is 'it' in the hymn, which can be interpreted as the church as a whole rather than the dome, and the courts are more likely to be outdoor spaces rather than galleries inside. Usually, the poet does not use symbolic references in the first line of the strophes but refers to a physical element.

Schneider and Grabar also interpreted these courts as surrounding the dome, and thus they suggested that they were an internal part of the church.[211] Cyril Mango kept the translation mentioning the courts but did not comment on what they may be referring to.[212] Just after the eleventh strophe, the poet starts to describe the façades. As McVey pointed out there is a structure in the hymn: The fifth to tenth strophes describe ceiling, dome, arches and revetments of the walls of the church. The eleventh to fourteenth strophes deal with the courts, façades, and

[207] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia'.
[208] Grabar, 'Le témoignage d'un hymne syriaque', 49; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 58.
[209] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 95.
[210] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 165.
[211] Schneider, 'Die Kathedrale von Edessa', 165. Grabar, 'Le témoignage d'un hymne syriaque', 45.
[212] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 58.

the windows; that is, the external features of the church. The fifteenth to nineteenth strophes deal with the major liturgical furnishings.[213] Given this arrangement, we may speculate that the eleventh strophe of the poem refers to an external feature of the church. When the courts in the hymn are interpreted as outdoor features, the likeness to the Tribes of Israel surrounding the Tabernacle is still valid if one interprets the Tabernacle as the church itself. Expressions like 'surrounding' or 'around the dome' complicate matters because there are two porticos (or stoas) in question, which cannot surround either a dome or a church.

The twelfth strophe reads 'On every side it has the same façade; the form of the three of them is one, Just as the form of the holy Trinity is one'.[214] Palmer considered the eastern façade as the different façade and included this comment in his translation: On each side *except at the east* the temple has an identical aspect. Schneider and Grabar also thought that the east façade was the different façade, based mainly on the windows of the church. We are told in the thirteenth strophe that the church had three windows on the east façade and in the fourteenth strophe that 'the light of its three sides abides in many windows', probably talking about the other sides. However, the number of windows alone is not sufficient to argue that the estern façade was the façade that differed from others. We are also told in the seventeenth strophe that 'five doors open into (the church) like the five Virgins'. Based on that, McVey raises the alternative that the façade that was different could have been the west façade. She thought the doors must have been on the west façade, and the church might have been a triconch.[215]

It is impossible to decide which façade was different on the basis of the arrangement of the windows and doors. I think the criteria for the poet when differentiating one of the façades from the others was not the number of windows and doors, but more distinctive features related to the general form of the church, such as a protruding apse on the east or a distinctive narthex on the west. It is tempting to argue that the western façade was the different façade and that the church served as a prototype for the peculiar centralized churches of Mor Ḥananyo in Dayr az-Zaʿfaran and Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ in Ṭur ʿAbdin, which seem also to be interpretations of local transverse-hall-type churches. The different side could also be the eastern side with a protruding apse, probably similar to the cathedral at Dara. In that case, the church could have been a domed basilica (see Fig. 2.5.9 for the cathedral at Dara),[216] a form with which builders experimented during the sixth century, with St. Sophia at Constantinople being its best example.

[213] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 109.
[214] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 95.
[215] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 102.
[216] We have not reproduced the suggested plans for St. Sophia at Edessa here as they are all hypothetical.

It has been suggested that the fourth strophe of the *Sogitha* implies that the church was not very large. Palmer's translation reads: '. . . its spaciousness invites comparison with the world; yet not so much in scale as in design . . .'. Rodley interpreted this as meaning the church was not large but spacious and since the poet could not comment on the size of the church, he tells us how its type made it spacious.[217] However, there is no mention of spaciousness in the text. McVey preferred to translate the same line as '. . . its smallness is like the wide world, not in size but in type'.[218] An alternative translation we offer is: 'It is like the world reduced, not in size but in design.' Relating the cosmos to the church is a popular notion and I do not think the poet was actually referring to a small church. As mentioned, Muslim authors pictured it as a large building. Mattia Guidetti refers to the fourteenth-century Persian traveller Hamd Allah Mustawfi who claimed that the dome was 100 gaz (around 100 English yards), and that it was the most solid building ever built.[219] This is equivalent to around 90 metres. He probably mentions the circumference. If he does, the diameter of the dome was claimed to be 30 metres, which is around the diameter of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, making the statement unlikely but not impossible.

The church was elaborate inside. It had golden mosaics on the ceiling (*Sogitha*, fifth and tenth strophes) and the walls were covered with white marble revetments (ninth strophe). Fifteenth strophe records that it had a bema: 'Set in the middle of the temple is a platform (bema), evoking the Upper Room in Sion; for just as the eleven Apostles hid there, so there are eleven columns under the platform.'[220] Although we cannot come up with a certain plan type for Hagia Sophia in Edessa in the light of the above, we can at least argue that the churches of the surrounding cities should also be included in the picture. An aisled-tetraconch, like the one in Amida; a domed basilica, like the one in Dara; or a transition-type to the cross-domed churches, like the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Martyropolis, are all possibilities for the plan of the church.

2.3.2 Around Edessa

In terms of ecclesiastical architecture, the immediate vicinity of Edessa is remarkable because of the remains of monasteries. According to ancient texts, the hills surrounding Edessa had a concentration of cave ascetics in the early period, and churches and monasteries in the later period.[221] Amongst the monasteries around Edessa, the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub, standing 4 kilometres west of the city, has

[217] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 158.
[218] McVey, 'The Domed Church', 95.
[219] Guidetti, 'The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām', 9.
[220] Palmer and Rodley, 'The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia', 135.
[221] Segal, *Edessa*, 264.

Fig. 2.3.5 Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub

survived (Fig. 2.3.5). It was originally a pagan foundation. There is a tower tomb in the north-west corner of the site which bears a pre-Christian Syriac inscription.[222] It was converted to a monastery, probably in the fifth or sixth century. The site was later used as a military base[223] because of its convenient location dominating the landscape. The plan of the Church of Mor Yaʿqub has been linked to the monastic churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[224] On ascending the hill, one can see rock-cut chambers and quarries, which shows that the area could have provided shelter for hermits.

On a hill about 1 kilometre south-west of Mor Yaʿqub, at about the same elevation, there are ruins of another substantial Late Antique foundation. This structure is locally called 'Çardak Manastırı' (Monastery of Çardak) (Fig. 2.3.6). The ruins are impressive, with crosses carved on lintels, tombs, and cells of monks.[225] These ruins can be associated with one of the monasteries recorded in Chronicle of 1234, which are described as standing on top of a hill, namely, the Monastery of John Theologus, the Monastery of the Exedra, the Church of Mor

[222] Drijvers and Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions*, As62a.
[223] Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, 47 for a plan.
[224] This will be discussed further in in Chapter 3, Section 3.3, 'Monasteries'.
[225] For some recent pictures: C. Kürkçüoğlu, 'Şanlıurfa'nın iki önemli Turizm Değeri: Deyr Yakup ve Çardak Manastırları', *Şanlıurfa Kültür Sanat Tarih Turizm Dergisi* 33 (2019): 25–8.

Fig. 2.3.6 Remains of the so-called Çardak Monastery

Damian, or one of the two monasteries dedicated to the Mother of God.[226] Detailed research needs to be done on this monastery.

Keloşk kale, at İnceler near Birtha (today Birecik), is a spectacular structure that used the exceptional construction technique of vertical ashlars. The team exploring the structure argued that the complex was either a villa rustica or a monastic settlement (Fig. 2.3.7).[227] Norhut, located around 90 kilometres west of modern Şanlıurfa, close to Keloşk Kale, has the remains of a church,[228] which recalls the churches of the Limestone Massif in terms of masonry technique and pitched roof. The north, south, and west walls of the church are still largely standing, whereas the apse has survived only at the foundation level (Fig. 2.3.8). Samuel Guyer

[226] Chronicle of 1234, 181. Names of many other monasteries, one with a stylite, are listed in Segal, *Edessa*, 109, 185, 191 (fn. 6).

[227] P. Baumeister et al., 'Die Keloşk Kale. Ein spätantiker Gebäudekomplex im türkischen Euphratbogen. Studien zu Osrhoene in der Spätantike', *IM* 57 (2007): 623–73. Keloşk alone does in fact mean small castle in Kurdish but the site has been published as Keloşk Kale (castle). It is also listed like that in the inventory of the Ministry of Culture: http://www.envanter.gov.tr/belge/index/detay/68304. The site is also known as Deyr Şebek. Deyr refers to a monastery. Şebek comes from şebeke, meaning grid in this context, referring to the structural system of the building with vertical and horizontal blocks.

[228] A. Zäh, 'Eine spätantike Kirche in Nuchrud (heute: Gürkuyu) im nördlichen Mesopotamien', *JÖB* 51 (2001): 375–81. https://mekan360.com/sanaltur_gurkuyu-nuhrut-koyu-bizans-kilisesi_3215.html.

Fig. 2.3.7 Remains of Keloşk Kale.

Fig. 2.3.8 Norhut Church from the south

recorded a three-aisled rural basilica close to Norhut which is also of a similar style,[229] and of which nothing survives today.

In the area around Birtha and Edessa, there are villages which have *burç* (tower) in their names, such as Beyburcu and Uzunburç to the north, and Keçiburcu, Yoğunburç, Kızılburç, and Tatburcu, to the south, suggesting that they were part of a military arrangement. There are no significant remains in these villages except scattered column capitals and remains of ancient walls. In Kızılburç, there are inscriptions from the Roman period. Kantarma, close to these villages, also has Roman or late Roman ruins, probably of a monumental *horreum*, maybe suggesting a military character for the area.

2.4 Amida

Amida (medieval Amid, modern Diyarbakır) was the metropolitan bishopric of Mesopotamia. It was an important military and administrative centre, located on a high plateau commanding the river Tigris. As a result of its strategic position, Amida had primary importance in Byzantine–Persian warfare. Fortified by Constantine II in 349, the city was taken by the Persians in 359 and returned to the Romans due to the peace treaty reached between the two Empires in 363.[230] However, in the same war, Nisibis, which was the main Roman stronghold in Mesopotamia, was lost. As a result of this loss, Amida became the main fortress in the area and received refugees from the lost territories. To accommodate the newcomers from Nisibis, a village outside the walls of Amida was fortified and its wall was linked with that of Amida.[231] Albert Gabriel had proposed a layout for the extension of the city, which was repeated until recently.[232] However, in a recent survey, Martine Assénat and Antoine Pérez offered a slightly different layout. They thought the eastern part of the city was pre-Constantinian and was later enlarged (the sectors are shown in Fig. 2.4.1; according to them, the south-western part was added for the people coming from Nisibis). In the eastern sector they have detected the contours of a theatre, which they tentatively dated to

[229] S. Guyer, 'Reisen in Mesopotamien im Sommer 1910/11', *Petermanns Mitteilungen* 6 (1916): 292–301, pl. 32.1; or see Zäh, 'Eine spätantike Kirche', fig. 1 for the same picture.

[230] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 19.1–9 gives an eyewitness account of the 73-day siege of Amida by the Persians in 359 and provides topographical information about the fourth-century city.

[231] Malalas, *Chronographia*, 336.5. Assénat and Pérez think the newcomers were placed in the extension of the city in the south-western part (which looks like the tail of a fish with which Amida's plan is usually associated): M. Assénat and Antoine Pérez, 'La topographie antique d'Amida (IIIe siècle après J.C.–VIe siècle après J.C.) d'après les sources littéraires', in *New Cities in Late Antiquity, Documents and Archaeology*, ed. E. Rizos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 57–70, 60. For the walls of Amida, see J. Crow, 'Amida and Tropaeum Traiani: A Comparison of Late Antique Fortress Cities on the Lower Danube and Mesopotamia', in *The Transition to Late Antiquity, on the Danube and Beyond*, ed. A. Poulter (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 435–55, 438.

[232] Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques*, fig. 142.

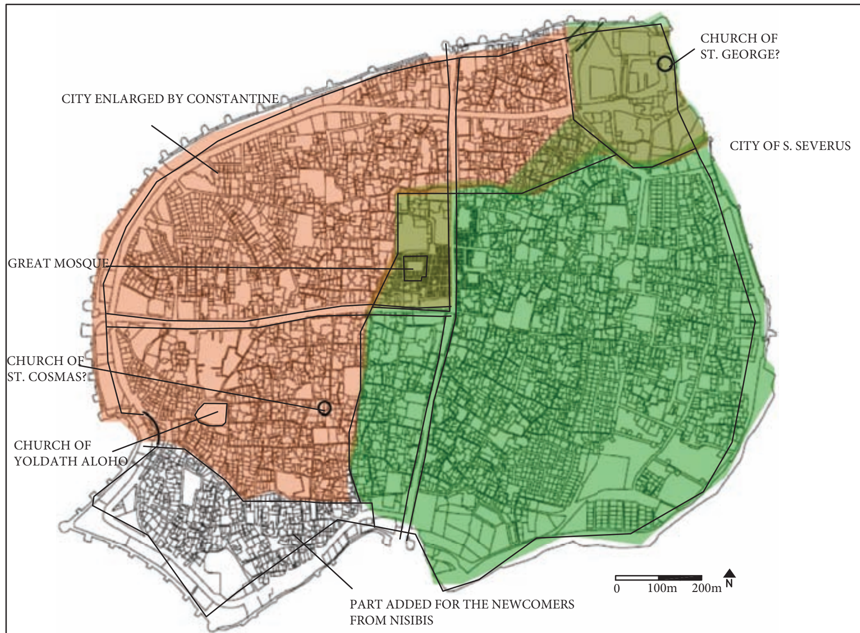

Fig. 2.4.1 Layout of Amida
Source: By the author after M. Assénat and A. Pérez.

mid-third century. In addition, they think that the angle of the west façade of the Great Mosque is different and more in line with the western part of the city and thus they suggested to extend the contours of the older city in a way that would include the Great Mosque.[233]

In 503, Amida was taken by Kawad I and in 504 it was returned to the Byzantines.[234] In the sixth and early seventh centuries, frequent conflict between the Romans and Persians around Amida is recorded in the histories of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, John of Ephesus, and Procopius. Amida fell again to Persians in 609, but was recovered in 628 by Heraklius.[235] Amida came under Arab control in 639. The *Life* of Theodotus of Amida (d. 698), a miaphysite bishop, gives insights about the situation of the Christians under the first Muslim authorities. The writer of this *Life* tells us that Theodotus 'ordered daily Eucharistic celebrations in all the chapels of Amida.' This may mean that all the churches in the city were tried to be kept active even if there was not enough clergy and congregation.[236]

[233] Assénat and Pérez, 'Amida Restituta', fig. 2.
[234] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 49–50.
[235] Cyril Mango suggested that the Theodore mentioned in one of the inscriptions on the walls of Amida could have been the brother of the emperor Heraclius, showing that in the seventh century, the walls of Amida were restored. C. Mango and M. Mango, *Inscriptions de la Mésopotamie du Nord*, *TM* 11 (1991): 465–71, inscs. 5–7.
[236] Palmer, *Life of Theodotus,* 146.1.

Amida's extended layout remained relatively unchanged. The city measured about 1.5 by 1 kilometres between the gates at its cardinal points, comparable in size with Gerasa and Ravenna. The late Roman *cardo* and *decumanus* had most probably been the street between the Urfa and Harput gates, and the street from the Mardin gate towards the Great Mosque, respectively. The walls of the city are still the most significant feature of the urban landscape. According to Gabriel who conducted extensive studies on the walls, in the middle ages there was considerable rebuilding of the walls, but they essentially still follow the fourth- to the sixth-century foundations. Amida had *apotheta*, which were store-buildings, built by the order of Anastasius in all cities but especially in Amida. The city had also public baths. Kawad I, the Persian shah, attended them upon taking Amida (503/504), and afterwards ordered baths to be built in towns across the Persian territory.[237] It had aqueducts, a tetrapylon, and perhaps a tripyrgion.[238] The latter was described as three towers including cisterns and a watchtower.[239] The wealth and prosperity of the city impressed the Persian shahs who attempted to take it several times.[240]

We know the names of several churches in the city in Late Antiquity. The first is the Church of Yoldath Aloho, which, as Palmer established, was not the cathedral in 464 but a separate church.[241] In 483/4, Yuḥannon Saʿuro of Qartmin Monastery, who was the bishop of Amida, built a large and splendid church dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.[242] We learn from Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor that the Church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in Amida was a large and splendid church.[243] During his siege in 503, the Persian king Kawad I razed the metropolitan church to the ground, which was subsequently rebuilt by imperial order. It is claimed that Jacob Baradaeus consecrated the rebuilt Great Church of Amida.[244] The Chronicle of Zuqnin reports that the Great Church of

[237] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 76, 81, 61 respectively.

[238] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, x.0.2; vii. 4a.

[239] Assénat and Pérez, 'Amida Restituta', 15.

[240] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, ed. G. Greatrex, trans. R. R. Phenix and C. B. Horn, contributions by S. P. Brock and W. Witakowski (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), vii.4.f.

[241] Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, Introduction. See this reference also for sources on other churches in Amida.

[242] Chronicle of 819, *Anonymi auctoris chronicum ad 1234 pertinens I. Praemissum est Chronicon Anonymum ad A.D. 819 pertinens*, trans. J. B. Chabot, *CSCO* 109 (1937): 4. Another suggestion was that it was located on the 'Hill of the Forty' (Kırklar Dağı) to the south of the city. H. Takahashi, 'Amid', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 18–20. The cult of the Forty Martyrs seems to be prominent in the region. Churches were dedicated to the Forty Martyrs at Qartmin, in Edessa (Segal, *Edessa*, 199; Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, 21.4) and there is a much later church in Mardin which still functions today (see E. Keser, *Tur Abdin, Süryani Ortodoks Dini Mimarisi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2002), 82–5.

[243] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, Chronicle, VII, 4.

[244] John of Ephesus, Appendix by an anonymous writer, 'Lives of the Eastern Saints', ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, 'John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints (I–III)', *PO* 17–19 (1923–26): vol. 19, 604f. While attacking the individual emperors, as Wood argues, John of Ephesus imagines Chalcedonians and miaphysites as a single church. P. Wood, 'Historiography in the Syriac Speaking World, 300–1000',

Amid was restored in *c.*767/768: 'they applied new material in replacement of all the decay that was in it, and made it as glorious as it had been originally',[245] suggesting that the cathedral was still intact and refurbished to its former glory.[246] The Great Church of Amid burned down by accident in 848, and was rebuilt starting three years later.[247] It should be noted that we do not know if the 'Great Church' in these accounts always refers to the same building, or if those buildings were cathedrals from different time periods.[248]

The colophon of a Syriac manuscript at the Syrian Orthodox patriarchal library in Damascus mentions that the sultan destroyed the great cathedral, the Church of the Forty Martyrs, and the Church of Mor Cosmas in Amid in 1214, after recently demolishing the Church of Mor Yuḥannon of Tella.[249] This seems to indicate that the Great Church was still standing at that time, and the Church of Forty Martyrs was not the Great Church as it is listed as a separate church. The Ayyubid author Ibn Shaddad (1217–85) describes the destruction of a church under the Artuqid sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Maḥmūd (r. 1201–22), falling into the same period as the previous account, noting that some of its stone was used to build a textile warehouse, and that part of the building remained 'as a testament to its grandeur'. Ibn Shaddad's account shows that the destroyed church was not the Church of Maryam, which he describes as on the side of the Bab al-Rum, and is clearly the Church of Yoldath Aloho.[250]

In the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, the Church of Yoldath Aloho is recorded while mentioning the burial place of patriarchs.[251] Michael the Syrian mentions 'the Great church' of Amida as a different building,[252] and he records the restoration of Yoldath Aloho in 1171.[253] However, from a later account appended

in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge 2019), 405–20, 407. It is not impossible that Baradaeus consecrated the church given that after a period of persecution, some miaphysite bishops were re-established in ca.546 (Takahashi, 'Amid', 20).

[245] Chronicle of Zuqnin, 228.

[246] According to Guidetti's arguments about the use of churches in the Early Islamic period, it is highly likely that it was standing and renewed (Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 52).

[247] Bar Hebraeus, *The Ecclesiastical Chronicle: An English Translation*, trans. D. Wilmshurst (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016).

[248] It is common to see a cathedral church just referred to as the 'great church' of its city. However, see also the discussion on how the criteria that defined a 'cathedral' church blurred in Antioch: W. Mayer and P. Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300–638 CE)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 180–2.

[249] F. Y. Dolabani, R. Lavenant, S. P. Brock, and S. K. Samir, 'Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du Patriarcat Syrien Orthodoxe à Homs, auj. à Damas', *PdO* 19 (1994): 555–661, 603–4.

[250] Ibn Shaddād, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, and Yaḥyá ʿAbbārah, *Al-Aʿlāqal-khaṭīrah fī umarāʾ al-Shām wa-al-Jazīrah* (Dimashq: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1956), vol. 3, pt. 1 (f. 66v and 66r, p. 258 and 259). I thank Linda Wheatley-Irving and Suleyman Dost for translation. For a summary of this source in French: C. Cahen, 'La Djazîra au milieu du XIIIe siècle, d'après Ibn Chaddad', *Revue des études islamiques* 8 (1934): 109–28.

[251] Mentioning burials from 1056 and 1072. Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, III, 162, 171, 345, 472, and 474.

[252] For a burial in the church in 1042: Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, III, 148 and 471.

[253] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, III, 341.

to the Chronography of Bar Hebraeus (Abū'l Faraj), we get the impression that the Church of Yoldath Aloho was the cathedral of Amida, as the author notes that in 1297 the 'Great Church of Yoldath Aloho' at Amida was looted and burned, 'and its buildings were destroyed, and its beautiful and wonderful porticoes and pillars were overthrown; and through the intensity of the conflagration and the fierceness of the flames it was reduced to a mere heap of stones'.[254]

Besides the Great Church, Forty Martyrs, and Yoldath Aloho, there are mentions of churches dedicated to Mor Zʿuro, St. John the Baptist, and Bēth Shuro (in a village of that name outside Amida).[255] The existence of a church built by Heraclius and dedicated to St. Thomas is mentioned, but the source is not reliable.[256] The Church of St. John the Baptist was recorded as the burial place of Bishop Yuḥannon of the Arabs in 649/50.[257] A *mimro* (homily) by Yaʿqub of Sarug mentions the conversion of the Church of St. Stephen to a fire temple.[258] A synagogue was recorded in a village near Amida. It was razed to the ground and a small martyrion *(bēth sohde)* dedicated to Yoldath Aloho was built in its place.[259]

Despite the names, little archaeological evidence remains from the churches. The Great Mosque of Amid is analysed under a separate heading as it is usually associated with a church. The aisled-tetraconch, known at least since the thirteenth century as Yoldath Aloho, has partly survived. Of the Church of Mor Cosmas and Damian, only fragments of *opus sectile* have survived. A monument in the citadel is known as St. George but as we shall argue below it was probably not a church.

[254] Chronography of Gregory Abü'l Faraj, *The Chronography of Gregory Abü'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus, Being the First Part of His Political History of the World*, vol. I, trans. E. A. W. Budge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), XI, 598; English trans., 509.

[255] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, VII.3–4 and Chronicle of 819, 4; St. Thomas, Mor Zʿuro, Great Church of Amida and St. John the Baptist (Chronicle of Zuqnin, 144 (151–2); Bēth Shuro (Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Chronicle, trans. W. Witakowski, Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Chronicle, Part III. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. Parts iii and iv: A.D., 1996), 33 and John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 197.

[256] Pseudo-Wāqidī mentions a great church dedicated to St. Thomas but it is a problematic source, which cannot be securely dated. Palmer, 'Āmīd in the Seventh-century', 130–4.

[257] Takahashi, 'Amid', 20.

[258] M. Debié, 'Guerres et religions en Mésopotamie du Nord dans l'Antiquité tardive: un mimro inédit de Jacques de Saroug sur l'église Saint-Étienne que les Perses ont transforméeen temple du feu à Amid (Diyarbakır) en 503 è.c.', *Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Journal* 56 (2018): 29–91.

[259] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 91.

2.4.1 Great Mosque

The city's Friday or 'Great' Mosque is of great significance for us as it incorporates extensive Late Antique spolia.[260] The building's expansive courtyard is defined by the tall western façade located behind the fountains opposite the court's main entrance. This remarkable façade is largely composed of reused material, which is usually claimed to be *spolia* from a church, arranged in a classical fashion. The eastern façade appears to mirror the western in height, length, and its two-tiered design, and seems to be a version or interpretation of the opposite façade with arabesque bands and other Islamic motifs. It also incorporates reused material. The Great Mosque of Amid is considered one of the oldest mosques in Anatolia and has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Here we shall deal with the eastern and western façades, which incorporate significant Late Antique spolia.

The western façade (Fig. 2.4.2) of the Great Mosque of Amid has two stories, with an arcade of nine bays. The first-floor column shafts, about two metres apart, are composed of several fragments, and are topped by an entablature comprising

Fig. 2.4.2 Western façade of the Great Mosque of Diyarbakır

[260] Parts of the discussion on the Great Mosque of Amida are from my article: E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Great Mosque at Amid: Neither Classicisms nor Spolia', in *Spolia Reincarnated*, ed. I. Jevtic and S. Yalman (İstanbul: Koç University Press, 2019), 125–47.

an architrave, frieze, and cornice. Corbels rise from the latter, and above them are two additional bands. These ornamentations have classical motifs, such as acanthus leaves, bead and reel, vine scrolls, dentils, and egg and dart. Behind the capitals is a Kufic inscription. The arches between the columns are pointed, except for the third from the south and the first from the north, which are shouldered.

The upper floor has shorter column shafts, and each of the ten on the façade has a different type of decoration, including a swastika meander, a swastika meander with rosettes, a diagonal swastika with larger rosettes, diagonal rows of crosses, a scale pattern, diagonal rows of crosses and hexagons enclosing rosettes, a diaper of hexagons enclosing squares, and gradually diminishing concentric rhomboids.[261] Above the shafts are Corinthian capitals, on top of which runs a Kufic inscription like an architrave. Another entablature seals all of them. Between the columns there are window frames topped with flat lintels. All the fragments on the façade, except for the two inscription bands, are reused material from the Late Antique period.

The sculpture on the column capitals, friezes, and cornices is typical of Northern Mesopotamian architectural sculpture found at Edessa, Dara, Martyropolis, and the Monastery of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān in Ṭur ʿAbdin, showing that a school of sculpture of a highly classical character was active in the whole region.[262] The shafts in the second storey are not typical of shafts that have survived from Late Antique Mesopotamia. As mentioned, each is adorned with a different type of decoration. Similar, but not identical, motifs appear in the soffits of the Holy Trinity church of the Monastery of St. Simeon the Younger (541–551), in a closure slab from Constantinople, and in the shafts of the south church at Bawit, Egypt.[263] This habit of filling all available space with a repetition of such patterns is reminiscent of Sasanian capitals (late sixth, early seventh century) from Venderni, Bisutun, and Isfahan, as well as other Sasanian architectural fragments.[264] The lower inscription on the western façade dates to 1117–18 and the upper one to 1124–25.[265] The façade must have been built after the fire of 1115 or 1116 that is recorded by Matthew of Edessa.[266]

[261] J. Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler von Amida', in *Amida: matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulmanes du Diyarbekr*, ed. M. van Berchem and J. Strzygowski (Heidelberg, Paris: C. Winter, E. Leroux. 1910), fig. 78.

[262] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition'.

[263] W. Z. Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag, 1986), 77, figs. 141, 146, and 147.

[264] Kleiss, 'Die Sasanidischen Kapitelle'; and J. Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor: ein Beitrag zum Relief dekor aus Stuck in sasanidischer und frühislamischer Zeit* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1982), pl. 88.

[265] J. Raby, 'Nur al-din, the Qastal Al-Shu'aybiyya, and the "Classical Revival" ', *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 289–310, 301.

[266] H. D. Andreasyan, *Urfalı Mateos vekayinâmesi, 952–1136 ve Papaz Grigor'un zeyli, 1136–1162* (Ankara: TTK, 1962 [repr. 1987, 2000; Turkish trans.]), CCXIX, 257.

The eastern façade, which is perpendicular to the rest of the design, has the same height and length as the western façade, although not parallel to it but in alignment with the rest of the courtyard (as the western façade is slightly tilted). Its inscription records that the Nisanid Abu'l Qasimʿ Ali built it during the reign of the Inalid Mahmud, in 1163–64, about forty years after the west façade was constructed. The general arrangement and proportions of the eastern façade closely parallel those of the western façade. The capitals and shafts on the eastern façade are also composed of reused fragments with newly produced friezes with Islamic motifs. Because of the similar arrangement, Allen described the decoration of the frieze on the east façade as 'assimilated to contemporary Islamic motifs'.[267] Mango makes a similar point by stating that the topmost row of leaves, the egg and dart, and flutes have become arabesque scrolls, the modillions have been turned to projecting leaves, and the split palmettes are transformed into winged palmettes. Although some classical forms were retained, such as the bead and reel, dentils, and vine scrolls,[268] they became rather abstract, reminiscent of the eighth-century sculpture of Ṭur ʿAbdin.

After analysing all the reused column shafts in Diyarbakır, it has been argued that four types of rock are used in the city's historical buildings: pre-Tertiary meta-ophiolites, Eocene limestone, Miocene limestone, and Plio-Quaternary basalt, all from the environs of the city. The Great Mosque of Amid is the only historic structure built with different types of stone.[269] All the decorated column shafts on the second floor of the mosque's west façade, as well as their capitals, are Eocene, probably because it is a soft stone suitable for carving. Since Eocene is a weak rock, the reused shafts must not have been load-bearing in their original context, as is the case in their secondary use. Rarely found meta-ophiolites have been used in the column shafts in the central part of the west façade's lower story, and are arranged to form an arch. On the east façade, they are employed in the central six column shafts of the upper and lower floors. The rare meta-ophiolites were used in the most visible parts of the mosque.[270]

Stryzgowski's study of the Great Mosque of Amid and its two façades remains the foremost work published on the building. He discusses the two 'gorgeous' façades of the mosque together with Christian buildings of Amid, and elaborates on their possible origins in pre-Christian buildings, noting their resemblance to a *scaenae frons* (the backdrop of a theatre's performance area), which was later accepted by some scholars. He concludes that the mosque was erected in place of a

[267] T. Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1986), 39–41.

[268] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 128.

[269] V. Toprak and O. Kavak, 'Sur içi (Diyarbakır) Tarihi Binalarındaki Silindirik Kaya Kolonların İncelenmesi', *İBB Restorasyon Konservasyon Çalışmaları Dergisi* 11 (2012): 23–36, 35.

[270] O. Kavak, N. Dalkılıç, and V. Toprak, 'Geological and Architectural Investigation of Reused Rock Columns in the Great Mosque in Diyarbakır Old City (Turkey)', *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 11/2 (2011): 9–22.

church and with its material.[271] Based on this argument, later scholarship tried to identify the church and determine its exact location and dedication. Moreover, it has been argued that the church built by the emperor Heraclius in Amida was dedicated to St. Thomas, and once stood where the Great Mosque is now situated.[272] The Chronicle of Zuqnin records that construction of the 'great church of Amida' was begun by the emperor Heraclius in 629,[273] but makes no mention of the building's location or dedication. Only Pseudo-Waqidi relates that it was dedicated to St. Thomas.[274]

A church probably did exist close to the Great Mosque when Nāṣer-e Khosraw visited Amid in December 1046. He writes: 'Inside the mosque stand 200 odd stone columns, all of which are monolithic, above the columns are stone arches, and above the arches is another colonnade shorter than the first. Above that is yet another row of arches. All the roofs are peaked, carved, sculpted and painted with designs [and] near the mosque is a large church, elaborately made of the same stone, and the floor is laid in marble designs. Beneath the dome, which is the Christians' place of worship, I saw a latticed iron door.'[275]

Based on the argument that all the city's buildings are made of basalt, it has been suggested that Nāṣer-e Khosraw was talking 'about a mosque housed in what had formerly been the nave of the church'.[276] His narrative does not portray the current mosque. K. A. C. Creswell notes that if Nāṣer-e Khosraw's account is accurate, the present sanctuary must have been built after 1046.[277] The repeated account that the mosque was divided between Christians and Muslims influenced interpretation of the archaeological material. Samuel Guyer suggested a basilical plan for the church. He believed that the church occupied the western part of the existing mosque, with the mosque's outer north wall serving as the axis of the church's northern arcade. His hypothetical plan was of a three-aisled columned basilica with a tripartite sanctuary at the east end, as in North Syrian examples and at Martyropolis.[278] Recent excavations, done during the restoration of the mosque, clearly show earlier buildings in the site.[279] The assertion that the church was

[271] Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler von Amida', 208–11.

[272] M. van Berchem, 'Matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulmanes du Diyar-bekr', in *Amida*, ed. M. van Berchem and J. Strzygowski (Heidelberg 1910.) Other scholars followed him: S. Guyer, 'Amida', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 38 (1916): 193–237; and K. A. C. Creswell, 'Mardin and Diyarbekr', *Muqarnas* 15 (1998): 1–8, 7 (published posthumously).

[273] Chronicle of Zuqnin, 142.

[274] Palmer assessed this identification based on contemporary religious controversies and argued that Heraclius could not have built a church dedicated to St. Thomas. Palmer, 'Āmīd in the Seventh-century', 130. For an analysis of the sources on that matter, see Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, Introduction.

[275] Safarnāma, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, trans. W. M. Thackston, Jr (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 11.

[276] Palmer, 'Āmīd in the Seventh-century', 133.

[277] Creswell, 'Mardin and Diyarbekr', 8.

[278] Guyer, 'Amida', 235, fig. 23.

[279] M. F. Halifeoğlu and M. Assénat, ' Evaluation of the Excavations Carried Out between 2010 and 2017 in Diyarbakir Grand Mosque Complex for Restoration Work: Hanafis Section and Eastern Maksurah', *International Journal of Architectural Heritage* 14 (2020): 1–19. The authors of this article

partitioned recurs in scholarship. However, Guidetti argues that it was probably unfounded. For Amid, the only reference mentioning partition is the incorrect translation of the Arabic into German of the problematic text of al-Waqidi's *Futūḥ al-Shām*, probably not written by al-Waqidi but by someone in a later period. Although Van Berchem noted that this evidence does not match with other data, he considers it correct, a view that was later repeated by scholars.[280]

As regards Nāṣer-e Khosraw's assertion that the church was near the mosque, an alternative has recently been proposed. Assénat and Perez have argued that the site of the mosque may have been the city's forum with various buildings, part of which may have been later occupied by the cathedral. They suggest that the cathedral stood on the location of the Mesudiye madrasa, based mainly on the argument that the madrasa's plan closely resembles that of the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Martyropolis.[281] However, except for a similarity in plan, nothing else indicates that the madrasa might once have been a church.

As mentioned, the western façade of the Great Mosque is not perpendicular to the other walls. This made Assénat and Perez suggest that if all the reused fragments on the west façade in fact came from a single building, this building was probably located near the façade, rather than the stone being moved from elsewhere.[282] A recent geophysical analysis of the courtyard confirms that structures from different periods were located there since the foundation levels vary greatly, and that a structure, probably related to water, was behind the mosque on the western side.[283]Assénat and Perez suggest that the current façade must have originally resembled an antique façade which was later destroyed and then strengthened according to the original façade and was embellished with the Kufic band. They also argue that the fragments are not from a church since they lack Christian symbols, but from a pre-Christian building, probably of the third century.[284]

The congregational mosques were usually erected in the proximity of existing great churches, sometimes using the same sites and even walls.[285] Guidetti, while

describe their work as 'research and observation excavation and is far from the archaeological purpose'. They opened four trenches in the main prayer area (Hanafis section as they call it) revealing earlier floor levels. Their excavation to the south of the south wall revealed an area paved with *opus sectile* (fig. 17 in the article). In their excavation in the Eastern Maksurah, they found a portico. They think that a church was built on that portico and that the church was rebuilt several times. So, they seem to suggest a location for the church that is different from Guyer's.

[280] The phenomenon of the partition is mentioned also in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, and Cordoba. Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 38. Guidetti notes that the Arabic edition of the Pseudo-al-Waqidi text, probably written in the twelfth or thirteenth century, states that the Church of St. Thomas was converted into a mosque after the conquest. Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 52.

[281] M. Assénat and A. Pérez, 'Amida 2. Un Forum à Amida', *Anatolia Antiqua* 21 (2013): 135–58, 152.

[282] Assenat and Perez, 'Amida 2', 145.

[283] N. Fettahoğlu, 'Diyarbakır Ulu Cami'de yeraltında gömülü olduğu düşünülen arkeolojik yapıların elektrik yöntemle araştırılması', MA thesis, Sakarya University, 2012, 82.

[284] Assénat and Perez, 'Amida 2', 152.

[285] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 172.

discussing other possibilities for the location of the early mosque, also mentions the market place of the city where there is great public visibility as an alternative.[286] Therefore, the location of the Great Mosque or an earlier mosque in its place, or the extensive use of spolia, does not prove that there was once a church there.

There are various suggestions about the dating of the reused material in the mosque. Guyer dates them to the seventh century, principally based on the identification of the structure that stood there as the Church of St. Thomas built by Heraclius.[287] Creswell also argues that the entablature and columns are from an already existent seventh- or eighth-century building and that the entablature rested either on a blank, solid wall or on a wall pierced with windows. The façade was decorated with engaged piers, and Cresswell thinks it must have been dismantled and then re-erected. Upon reconstruction, ‘the wall behind the engaged columns of the first storey was then replaced by the present arches and the inscription frieze of 511 H. (1117/8) carved upon it’.[288] In his work on capitals from throughout the Byzantine Empire, Rudolf Kautzsch suggests a date between 450 and 550 for the Great Mosque’s capitals.[289] Brands, who analysed the sculpture in the most detail and contextualized it within wider Northern Mesopotamia, argues convincingly for a sixth-century date.[290] The sculpture is similar to other sixth-century examples in the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Amida, in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān in Ṭur ʿAbdin, and to the basilicas and gates in Resafa.

The dating of the sculpture to the mid-fifth/early sixth century encourages their attribution to a church. The city-centre location, suitable for a cathedral, may support this theory. But other structures were probably situated there too, given that Late Antique Amida had many civic buildings. In an investigation of Amida’s layout, Assénat and Perez found traces of a structure that appeared to be a theatre,[291] though in the north-east area of the city, away from the mosque. Assénat and Perez did not make a connection between the theatre and the mosque façade, but other authors, following Stryzgowski, have likened the mosque’s west façade to the *scaenae frons* of a theatre.[292] In fact, Sözen categorically states that reused fragments are from a Roman theatre, without providing references.[293]

[286] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 65. The eastern and western façades of the mosque are not discussed in Guidetti’s section on how the early Muslims viewed spolia, probably because of the erection of these façades in the twelfth century.

[287] Guyer, ‘Amida’, 235.

[288] Creswell, ‘Mardin and Diyarbekr’, 8.

[289] R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien: Beiträgezueiner Geschichte des spätantiken Kapitells im Osten vom vierten bis ins siebente Jahrhundert* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1970), 223.

[290] G. Brands, *Die Bauornamentik*, 240.

[291] Assénat and Pérez, ‘Amida Restituta’, 19. Ancient sources mention a theatre-like structure in sixth-century Amida. Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, 76.

[292] O. Aslanapa, *Anadolu’da İlk Türk Mimarisi Başlangıç ve Gelişmesi* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları: 1971, reprint 2007), 31.

[293] M. Sözen, *Diyarbakır’da Türk Mimarisi* (Istanbul: Diyarbakır’ı Tanıtma ve Turizm Derneği Yayınları, 1971), 31.

Julian Raby recently made the same analogy, but did not elaborate upon it.[294] None of the authors who mentioned this similarity linked the façade to a possible theatre in the city.

Whether or not fragments came from it, a theatre existed in sixth-century Amida, and it was possibly still extant when the first mosque was built. The twelfth-century restoration of the mosque after the fire of 1115 may have taken its references from an earlier Islamic building and the latter may, in fact, be influenced by the theatre. The unusual appearance of the façade tempts one to make this suggestion. It does not resemble the façade of a church aisle or the Byzantine-looking courtyard façades of earlier mosques. In terms of arrangement, the façades of the mosque look even older. The Late Antique fragments are put together in a way that has no parallel in Late Antiquity. In relation to other buildings, like the nympheum at Miletus, Strzygowski states that the upper arrangement evokes the Temple of Jupiter at Split, which dates to the fourth century.[295] Although nothing can be said with certainty about the origins of the fragments, they are clearly from the sixth century. The positioning of the fragments may be replicating an earlier building, like the theatre.

2.4.2 Church of Yoldath Aloho

The Church of Yoldath Aloho (meaning Mother of God in Syriac), is located in the south-west quarter of the city.[296] It is still an active church. The sanctuary area of the original church is used as naos today and this part is today covered with a brick dome. A portico composed of four reused columns defines the entrance of the church to the west. Parts of the west wall of the modern church are higher than the rest, showing that the original wall had been higher. The current Church of the Yoldath Aloho faces a courtyard surrounded by the house of the bishop, a guest room, the house of a Syrian Orthodox family, and other annexes that were mostly built in the late nineteenth century when the church was temporarily used as the seat of the patriarch. Aside from the parts of the church building that still exist, no traces of a Late Antique structure are easily visible when viewed from the inner courtyard of the church. However, upon walking around the church property, the contours of the original building can be deciphered from the streets surrounding the church today (Fig. 2.4.3, the remaining walls are hatched). Bell reconstructed

[294] Raby, 'Nur al-din, the Qastal Al-Shu'aybiyya', 305.

[295] Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler von Amida', 148, 149.

[296] Parts of this section have been published in E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Church of the Virgin at Amida and the Martyrium at Constantia: Two Monumental Centralised Churches in Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia', *OLBA* 21 (2013): 405–35. This church is called El-Adhra or Maryam in Arabic and Meryem Ana in Turkish, and appears with these names and with the name of the Church of Virgin in various publications.

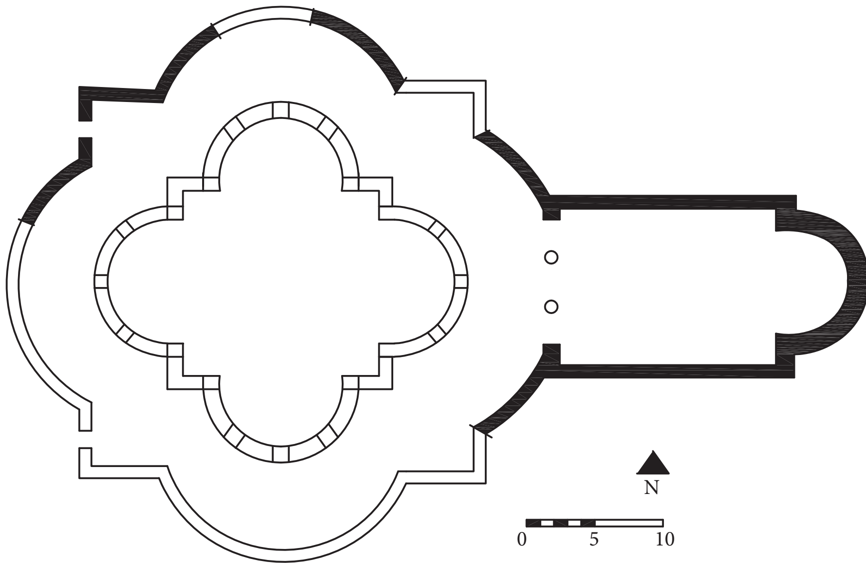

Fig. 2.4.3 Reconstructed plan of the Church of Yoldath Aloho
Source: By the author after Bell-Mango and Guyer.

the outer shell as a circular structure,[297] but the surviving remains clearly show that it was a tetraconch with L-shaped corners as was drawn by Guyer,[298] as the curved walls and L-shaped corners of the outer walls (Fig. 2.4.4) are still visible.

The aisled-tetraconch was a widespread plan type in the Eastern Roman Empire in the Late Antique period. Twenty-three structures were recorded throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond.[299] Eugene Kleinbauer explored some of these churches in an article published in 1973, which remains one of very few studies that deal with the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. Kleinbauer classifies the aisled-tetraconch at Amida within the architectural family, which included six aisled-tetraconch churches in Oriens that he thinks were all cathedrals, namely those in Seleucia-Pieria, Resafa, Apamea, Bostra, Aleppo, and Amida. Besides

[297] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 25.

[298] S. Guyer, 'Le rôle de l'art de la Syrie et de la Mésopotamie à l'époque byzantine', *Syria* 14 (1933): 56–70, 67, fig. 3.

[299] In Italy (at Milan and at Canosa in Apulia), in Greece and the Balkans (at Athens, Lake Ochrid, Perushtitsa, and Adrianople), in Egypt (two at Abu-Mina), in Syria and Mesopotamia (at Seleucia-Pieria, Apamea, Bostra, Aleppo, Resafa, and Amida), the south coast of Asia Minor (Corycus and Perge), in Armenia (at Zuart'noc', Bana and Ishani), and in Azerbaijan (at Ljakit). See E. W. Kleinbauer, 'The Double-shell Tetraconch Building at Perge in Pamphylia and the Origin of the Architectural Genus', *DOP* 41 (1987): 277–93, 280; P. Grossmann, 'Die zwei schaligen spätantiken vierkonchen bauten in Ägypten und ihre Beziehung zu den gleichartigen Bauten in Europa und Kleinasien', in *Das römisch byzantinische Ägypten: Akten des internationalen Symposions 26–30. September 1978 in Trier* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1983), 167–74, fig. 3. Additional churches with this plan have been found over the years, see C. Bonnet et al., 'Le temple des faubourgs de l'antique Péluse et l'église tétraconque de Tell el-Farama (Egypte–Nord Sinai)', *Genava* 57 (2009): 127–50.

Fig. 2.4.4 Outer walls of the Church of Yoldath Aloho

having similar plans, the churches in this architectural family were probably all single-storied structures which had no galleries above the ambulatories and whose central space was covered either with a pyramidal roof or with a dome made of timber. Kleinbauer supports his idea by pointing out that all these churches were situated in cities of considerable importance, which were geographically close to each other. In addition, all were built within a seventy-five-year period; from about 460 to the second quarter of the sixth century, and were vast in size.[300]

Amongst the many aisled-tetraconch churches built all around the Empire, the churches at Seleucia-Pieria and Apamea are the closest parallels to the Amida church in terms of overall layout and dimensions.[301] Thus, it is most likely that the church at Amida shared a similar inner layout with these churches, which have a four-lobed arrangement in the middle.[302] The church at Apamea has huge piers from an earlier building. Since it was not built on top of an earlier structure, it is

[300] E. W. Kleinbauer, 'The Origins and Functions of the Aisled Tetraconch Churches in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia', *DOP* 27 (1973): 89–114, 91.

[301] Plans of three of them published together in: W. Khoury and A. Riba, 'Les églises de Syrie (ive–viie siècle): essai de synthèse', in *Les églises en monde syriaque*, ed. F. Briquel Chatonnet (Paris: Geuthner, 2013), 41–84, 61, fig. 12.

[302] Guyer's suggestion for the transition from the chancel to the outer four-lobed ambulatory wall (Guyer, 'Le rôle de l'art', fig. 3) seems problematic. One would expect to find a symmetrical arrangement in the corners of the outer lobes, as is the case in other aisled-tetraconch churches in the Empire,

Fig. 2.4.5 Wall of the sanctuary part of the Church of Yoldath Aloho

more probable that the church at Amida had a similar interior arrangement to the church at Seleucia-Pieria: that is, L-shaped slender piers placed in the corners of the lobes and with columns between them. The pinkish coloured column shafts reused in front of the apse and in the narthex of the modern church may have originally been situated between the L-shaped internal piers. The church at Amida was probably roofed with timber, as the aisled-tetraconch churches at Seleucia-Pieria, Resafa, and Bostra seem to have been. The extent to which the apse protrudes in the east is significant in the churches at Seleucia- Pieria, Apamea, and Amida (Fig. 2.4.5). The same is the case also in the Octagon at Constantia, which is discussed below.

Kleinbauer explains the resemblance of these churches to each other by proposing that they derived from a common prototype. Since he offered as a working hypothesis that the aisled-tetraconches in Oriens all functioned as cathedrals and metropolitan churches in the Patriarchate of Antioch, he suggests an Antiochene prototype from which they could have been derived independently from each

which are discussed below. The remains would actually allow a symmetrical reconstruction. The internal arrangement is another point that should be discussed in relation to Guyer's reconstruction. Guyer suggested a triconch, which is open on its east end. He probably suggested this inner layout because there is a similar type of arrangement in the aisled-tetraconch at Resafa where the eastern bay is elongated and turns into an apse. However, for the aisled-tetraconch at Amida, there is a separate elongated room, which ends with an apse.

other. He tentatively proposes the *Megale Ekklesia*, the so-called Golden Octagon at Antioch founded by Constantine the Great in 327 and finished by his son Constantine II in 341, as the prototype of these buildings.[303]

Kleinbauer argued that the aisled-tetraconch churches in Oriens were cathedrals. The aisled-tetraconch at Resafa was thought to be a cathedral because it has a space for a bishop's throne in its synthronon, a baptistery communicating with the apse, and episcopal tombs. However, all these exist also in Basilica A and it has convincingly been argued that the latter was actually the cathedral of Resafa.[304] There is also a rural example of an aisled-tetraconch church in Akdeğirmen höyük in the district of Yavuzeli of Birecik (Birtha), dated to the late fourth, early fifth century,[305] which shows that the form was not primarily chosen just for urban churches in that particular region. Such new discoveries prove the difficulty of assigning certain functions to certain forms used in Byzantine architecture.[306]

Like Kleinbauer, E. B. Smith suggests an Antiochene origin; yet he considers this building to have been a martyrium. Having identified the building as a martyrium, he explains the long eastern apse as resulting from liturgical needs. He thinks the building was divided into two ceremonially separate units: 'one the tomb memorial for the martyr's cult and the other the usual apsidal sanctuary where the Eucharistic cult was celebrated at the altar tomb of Christ'.[307] We do not know for certain if the aisled-tetraconch at Amida was a martyrium. Nevertheless, Smith's explanation for the long eastern apse is convincing. Not many scholars had thought about this peculiar feature, which we find also at the Octagon in Constantia.

[303] Kleinbauer, 'The Origins and Functions of the Aisled Tetraconch Churches', 111. Eusebius described the great church in Antioch as an octahedron and this church has usually been reconstructed as an eight-sided building with ambulatories and galleries resembling the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna or the Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople. Kleinbauer questions the meaning of the octahedron and thinks that formal possibilities other than an octagon should be explored, one of them being the aisled-tetraconch. Eusebius describes the 'Great Church' in Antioch with galleries above the ambulatories ringing the central space, a feature, according to Kleinbauer, absent in all Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Caucasian examples. Kleinbauer proposes two suggestions for this divergence. Firstly, the patrons of the later tetraconches may have found galleries unnecessary and simply may have eliminated them; secondly, the 'Great Church' may have lost its galleries after the earthquake of 458. Consequently, according to Kleinbauer, the first tetraconch in Apamea built just after that earthquake may have been modelled on the new 'Great Church', which had lost its galleries. See Mayer and Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 68–89 for more accounts on the cathedral of Antioch, which do not lead to a reliable reconstruction.

[304] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 82–91, summarizing all the arguments.

[305] H. Candemir and J. Wagner, 'Christliche Mosaiken in der nordlichen Euphratesia', in *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Friedrich Karl Dörnerzum 65. Geburtstag am 28. Februar 1976*, ed. J. Wagner et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1978): 192–231.

[306] The problems of taking a typological approach have been discussed in the past: Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 26–7; C. Mango, 'Approaches to Byzantine Architecture', *Muqarnas* 8 (1991): 40–4, 41.

[307] Smith, *The Dome*, 116.

Kleinbauer suggests also that the aisled-tetraconch churches were built as Chalcedonian churches.[308] Based on this argument, there have been further attempts to contextualize churches with aisled-tetraconch plans, claiming that this type was used in Armenia as a symbol of the Chalcedonian position and thus 'to demonstrate the patron's alliance with the Byzantine political and cultural world'. The example used to make this argument is the aisled-tetraconch at Zuart'noc', built most probably in the first ten years of Nersēs' office as the patriarch, 640–661, in Armenia.[309] As we shall discuss while dealing with the Octagon in Constantia, emperors used church building as a means of establishing the Chalcedonian position in the region. Given that we do not know when and by whom the aisled-tetraconch was built, it is not possible to ascertain if it was a Chalcedonian or anti-Chalcedonian foundation. Before the sixth century, bishops could be either, and churches were changing hands.

The aisled-tetraconch at Amida has gone through several phases of rebuilding, during the course of which many original features of the church have been lost. However, the architectural sculpture on the piers of the apse (Fig. 2.4.6), fragments of the apse archivolt, and the mullions reused as part of the low barrier

Fig. 2.4.6 Sculpture of the apse archivolt of the Church of Yoldath Aloho

[308] Kleinbauer, 'The Origins and Functions of the Aisled Tetraconch Churches'.

[309] C. Maranci, 'Byzantium through Armenian Eyes: Cultural Appropriation and the Church of Zuart'noc'', *Gesta* 40 (2001): 105–24, 105–7.

Fig. 2.4.7 Window mullions of the Church of Yoldath Aloho

(Fig. 2.4.7) dividing the apse and the naos are of a classicizing early sixth-century style. To the north of the present church stands a smaller church dedicated to Mor Yaʿqub of Sarug, whose relics are claimed to be there. It is like a subsidiary chapel with reliquaries inserted in the walls. Arabic and Syriac inscriptions record that the church has gone through several restorations between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries.[310] During the recent restoration of the church in 2005, the plaster from the façades was removed and this revealed the construction technique of the church consisting of alternating courses of stone and brick (Fig. 2.4.5). This technique, together with the plan of the church, show how connected it was to the building trends in other parts of the Empire.

[310] Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie*, 195; Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 90, fn. 78; G. Akyüz, *Diyarbakır'daki Meryem Ana kilisesinin tarihçesi* (İstanbul: Resim Matbaacılık, 1999), 55–6.

2.4.3 Church of St. Cosmas

The Church of St. Cosmas at Amida was located close to the Church of Yoldath Aloho, to the east of it. It was destroyed completely in 1930.[311] The church was recorded by Bell in 1911. Her plan of the church features a deep, unusual apse, and a transverse-hall with a narthex to the west of it. She described the apse, the rectangular room to the west of it, and the room to the south of this rectangular room as original. Although she identified most of the narthex wall as later work, she thought the piers on the east side were original.[312] It is difficult to guess on what basis Bell considered some parts original, as the surviving photographs do not tell much. A Syriac source records the destruction of the church in 1213,[313] and a Greek inscription dating to 1689 recorded that 'The Church of Cosmas and Damian' was renewed.[314] The presence of a Greek inscription may indicate that the church belonged to the Melkites in the seventeenth century. The dedication of the church to the healing saints, Cosmas and Damian, is noteworthy given that churches dedicated to these saints may have served policies of uniting the church, as shall be discussed in more detail in Section 2.7.1, 'The Octagon' in the part on Constantia.

The transverse hall of the church is unusual for the urban churches of the region. However, as Bell clarifies, it is impossible in the case of St. Cosmas to tell if that was the original plan. Bell suggests it may have been domed, based on the size of the piers. Guyer, on the other hand, thinks it was a basilica.[315] Pier C in Bell's plan has classical decoration and it may have been the first pier of the south aisle, suggesting a pier basilica. It is curious that Bell described the rectangular room to the west of the apse and the room to the south of this rectangular room as original and the western part of the church as 'much patched' and later. This may suggest a transverse layout in front of the apse. Transverse layouts are common in the monastic churches of the region. However, these churches differ from St. Cosmas in terms of their sanctuary arrangement and the absence of any piers in the nave. The closest parallel in plan is the Church of Elias in Ezra.[316]

The church had fragments of significant architectural decoration, recorded and photographed by Bell, including a profiled arch, a Corinthian engaged capital, and an uncut acanthus capital. Three marble slabs, with carved lozenges, that probably came from the chancel screen of the church were recorded.[317] The style of the

[311] O. C. Tuncer, *Diyarbakır Kiliseleri* (Ankara: Diyarbakır Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2002), 50.

[312] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 23, fig 13. Since it does not give much of an idea about the Late Antique phase of the building, the plan is not reproduced here.

[313] Dolabani, et al, 'Catalogue des manuscrits', 604.

[314] Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler', 171.

[315] Guyer, 'Amida', 193–237, 235.

[316] G. Stanzl, *Längsbau und Zentralbau als Grundthema der frühchristlichen Architektur: Überlegungen zur Entstehung d. Kuppelbasilika* (Wien: Verl. d. Österr. Akad. d. Wiss., 1979), fig. 31.4.

[317] Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler', figs. 89 and 91.

Fig. 2.4.8 *Opus sectile* fragments from St. Cosmas

architectural sculpture in this church was typical of the sixth-century sculpture in the region. The only material remains from this church are pieces of wall *opus sectile*, now in the depot of Diyarbakır Museum (inventory no: 268) (Fig. 2.4.8). These fragments remain unpublished. We do not have any descriptions of the wall revetment at St. Cosmas in the accounts of Bell or in other early travellers. However, from Beylie's photograph,[318] one can recognize the possible location of the *opus sectile* frames on the apse wall.

The *opus sectile* decorations on the walls that have survived from the Late Antique period are mostly from Justinianic churches, such as St. Sophia at Constantinople, St. Vitale at Ravenna, and the Eufrasius cathedral at Poreč.[319] The curves in the design of the *opus sectile* of St. Cosmas at Amida are also similar to the *opus sectile* in a house in Porta Marina in Ostia, although not as sophisticated.[320] Given the stylistic parallels between the *opus sectile* in these churches and the *opus sectile* in the Church of St. Cosmas, it is possible to date the latter to the

[318] Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler', figs. 90, 171.

[319] A. Terry, 'The "Opus Sectile" in the Eufrasius Cathedral at Poreč', *DOP* 40 (1986): 147–64, figs. 27–9.

[320] B. Kiilerich, 'The Opus Sectile from Porta Marina at Ostia and the Aesthetics of Interior Decoration', in *Production and Prosperity in the Theodosian period*, ed. I. Jacobs (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 169–87, fig. 9.

sixth century. From what has been preserved, it is difficult to tell the overall design of the *opus sectile* in the Church of St. Cosmas. Nevertheless, the contours visible in the photographs[321] hint at an arrangement which was on panels, as is the case also in the well-known examples mentioned above.

The fragments consist of mother-of-pearl and coloured marbles or other shiny stones (brown, light brown, black, and cream). The range of colours used in this church is limited when compared to the wall *opus sectile* in Ravenna, Constantinople, or Poreč. Amongst the fragments, we find narrow strips of different colours, which probably outlined major design components, as they did in examples in other parts of the Empire. There are also fragments hinting at circular borders. The dominant ornamentation is quatrefoils made of mother-of-pearl. Other florets which have petals of different sizes and shapes, diamond-shaped pieces of mother-of-pearl flanked with strips of brown marble, half-shells composed of mother-of-pearl and black marble, and a curving ivy vine motif which terminates in a quatrefoil with heart-shaped leaves are some of the geometric and floral forms in the St. Cosmas *opus sectile*, which are also very common in wall *opus sectile* elsewhere.[322]

2.4.4 Church of St. George

The so-called Church of St. George, located in the citadel of Amida, is a confusing building. The building has a prominent location in the city. It is on a very high site when approached from the east, and it looks over the Tigris River. Strzygowski states that it was a Nestorian church that was built in the fourth century and was then restored in 518 by Anastasius. Strzygowski puts emphasis on this building because of its close similarities to Sasanian buildings.[323] The building presents further evidence for his argument that Late Antique Christian art has eastern origins. He claims that the church was converted into a mosque in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Tuncer, on the other hand, thinks that the church was never used as a mosque, but during the Artuqids it was converted to a bath by the construction of the part in the west.[324] It was later used as a storage place and later as a prison. Today, the building is under construction to be converted into an exhibition hall attached to the Museum of Diyarbakır.

Bell provided a detailed description of the building. She defines it as a domed basilica but says 'it has certain peculiarities which are not found elsewhere'.[325] The so-called church is entered from the west. It has an unusual east end, which has

321 Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler von Amida', 170, fig. 90.

322 See K. A. Kelly, 'Motifs in Opus Sectile and Its Painted Imitation from the Tetrarchy to Justinian', PhD dissertation submitted to Columbia University, 1986, 193.

323 Strzygowski, 'Die Christlichen Denkmäler', 173.

324 Tuncer, *Diyarbakır Kiliseleri*, 141.

325 Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 66, for a plan fig. 43.

Fig. 2.4.9 The so-called church of St. George

large windows (Fig. 2.4.9). The nave is long in the east–west axis and is three-aisled. The side aisles are very narrow. The naos is separated from the aisles by arcades on columns, which have bases like small piers. The aisles are covered with five small brick vaults corresponding to the space between the arches. There is no architectural decoration in the building except the stalactite decoration under the oval dome, which rests on squinches. The recent restoration of the building revealed grooves in the column shafts and bases indicating that there were plates dividing the aisles and the nave. This may suggest that the building functioned as a church. However, similar spatial divisions might have been found in buildings with other functions as well.

According to Bell, the dome belongs to the Muslim period. The walls, she thinks, are a patchwork of reused material. With its narrow side aisles, the building recalls East Syrian churches such as those in Ctesiphon and Hira, and Sasanian palaces. In fact, Monneret de Villard argues that the plan of the church in Ctesiphon was derived from Persian palace architecture.[326] Reuther compared the plan of the so-called Church of St. George in Amida to that of the Sasanian palace of Sarvistan where one finds the same combination of vault and dome on squinches.[327] The strange elliptical shape of the dome and the squinch recalls

[326] Monneret de Villard, *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, 31.

[327] O. Reuther, 'Sasanian Architecture', in *Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 493–578. See also Okada, who points out that in the palace architecture, the

very much the Sasanid Firuzabad.[328] It also recalls Islamic buildings, for example the reception hall at Ukhaidir palace. We know of the existence of an Artuqid palace in the citadel in the twelfth century[329] and the earlier Muslim dynasties may have used the same location for their palaces. Thus, we tentatively suggest that this building belonged to an Early Islamic palace complex.

2.4.5 Around Amida

Like Edessa, the landscape around Amida was dotted with monasteries. John of Ephesus is our main source for the monasteries around Amida. He commemorates the monks in these monasteries by telling their life stories and mentioning the Christological controversies. His writings (especially *Lives of Eastern Saints*) have been interpreted as 'a partisan's view, written in Syriac for a Syrian audience',[330] that is why he might be exaggerating the numbers of the monks in the monasteries.[331] The names of the monasteries that were recorded as being in the close vicinity of the city are the Monasteries of John Urtoye (John of Anzitene), Ar'a Rabtha, Zuqnin, Mar Giln, Mar Mama, Kalesh,[332] Hawronyotho ('white poplars', located to the east of Amida, opposite the hot spring of Abarne), and the monastery of the lepers.[333]

Of the villages around the city, we do not know much. In the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus mentions the vicus of Abarne to the west of Amida.[334] According to Matthews, Ammianus's choice of the word *vicus* for Abarne (probably modern Çermik), which was famous for its warm baths of healing waters, shows that it was a large settlement.[335] Another village, Meiacarire, was

entrance is from the west whereas in East Syrian churches, they are from the south. He also mentions that both the Sasanid and the Early Islamic palace architecture feature three aisled halls. Okada, 'Early Christian Architecture', 71–83, 80.

[328] D. Huff, 'Qal'a-ye Dukhtar bei Firuzabad', *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 4 (1971): 127–71, figs. 8, 9.

[329] O. Aslanapa, 'Diyarbakır Sarayı Kazısından İlk Rapor (1961)', *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* XI (1962): 10–18.

[330] V. Menze, 'The Establishment of the Syriac Churches', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 105–19, 115.

[331] According to his descriptions, some monasteries contained 750 monks (John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 214).

[332] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 19, 552–73; vol. 17, 56; vol. 17, 37; vol. 18, 455; vol. 18, 406, and vol. 17, 91f respectively.

[333] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, VII, 4; Life of Theodotus, Section 134.11.

[334] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 18.9.2.

[335] Matthews, *The Roman Empire*, 402. According to Matthews, *vicus* 'corresponds well to a class of settlements well documented in the civic structure of the Roman Empire. The term is used to designate townships which, though established in the territory of another city to which they are attributed, possessed a degree of self-government and quasi-municipal system of internal organisation, and might even include substantial urban amenities.'

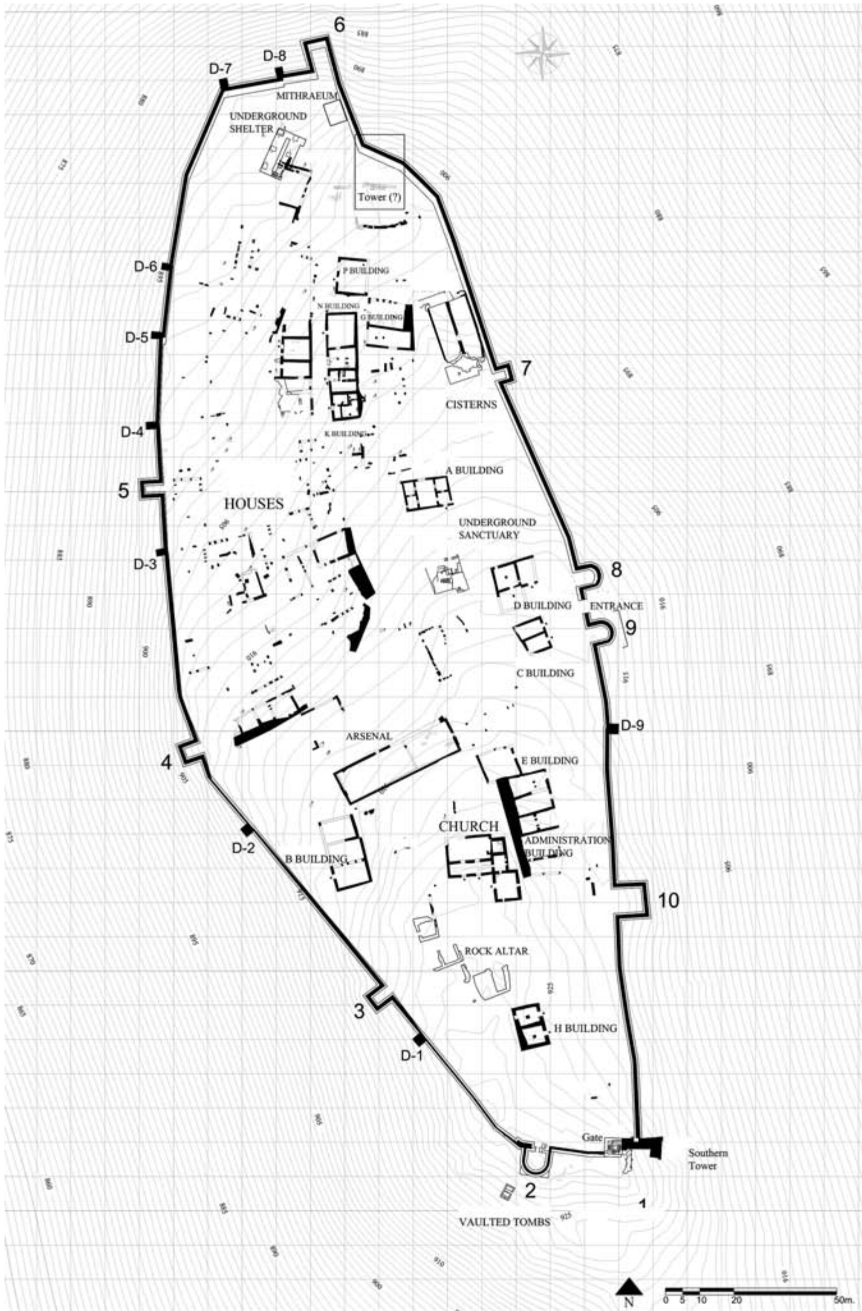

Fig. 2.4.10 Plan of Kale-i Zerzevan
Source: Courtesy of Aytaç Coşkun

Fig. 2.4.11 Church in Kale-i Zerzevan

described as having vineyards and fruit-bearing orchards. The local inhabitants are recorded as having decamped from there during the invasion of 359.[336] Later in the sixth century, Procopius mentions that there were many villages on the outskirts of the lofty mountain in the region.[337] This mountain must be the volcanic Karacadağ. Based on other sixth-century accounts, Trombley and Watt argued that there must have been about fifty villages around Amida.[338]

Despite the mention of villages and monasteries in the texts, the vicinity of Amida has not yet been surveyed for Late Antique remains. The only substantial Late Antique settlement around the city is Kale-i Zerzevan (Fig. 2.4.10), located on the modern Diyarbakır-Mardin road, 45 kilometres south of Diyarbakır. It is a fortress-settlement for soldiers and their families, identified as Samachi on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.[339] This settlement has remains of cisterns, enclosure walls, towers, possible houses, and a church. As it was not occupied later, the remains are

[336] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 18.6.16. [337] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.4.15.

[338] Introduction of Trombley and Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, xlvi. This is based on the accounts given by Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite and Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor who claim that in the early stages of the siege of Amida in 502, eighty thousand corpses were carried out of the city's North gate. The suggestion is that 30,000 people were living in Amida and its suburbs, and 50,000 in the villages. With the supposition of 1000 people per village, it has been suggested that there were fifty large villages around Amida.

[339] Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, 33.

remarkable and can give us an idea about the appearance of a fortress-settlement in Northern Mesopotamia. In 2014, Aytaç Coşkun from Dicle University, Diyarbakır, started excavations there. According to him, the northern part of the settlement is composed of houses and streets whereas the southern part is for public and administrative buildings. We tentatively suggested a similar, in that case east–west, division with the river in the middle, for Dara. Coşkun recorded around fifty-four cisterns in Kale-i Zerzevan. He identified different types of burials in the necropolis.[340] Although the small finds are not abundant and have not yet been published, we should note that the sixth-century bronze bucket with a Greek inscription on display in the İstanbul Archaeological Museum is from this settlement.[341]

The church of the settlement is located on the highest point. It is a hall-type church (Fig. 2.4.11) with a narthex lying to the south of the nave, as is the case also in the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin (see Fig. 2.4.10 also for the plan of the church). To the south of the apse is a small room, which also has parallels in Ṭur ʿAbdin. Thus it may be similar to the first phases of Ṭur ʿAbdin churches, without the engaged piers and the carved archivolts. It has been suggested that the relatively larger square room to the south-east of the church is a baptistery. Based on the profile of the cornices, the material, and the technique, a sixth-century date was suggested for the church.[342] Kale-i Zerzevan has strong parallels also with the Norhut church, such as the single nave and a narthex on the south, although the Norhut church has a projecting semi-circular apse and an entrance from the west, both of which are unusual for the rural parish churches of the region.[343] The church at Kale-i Zerzevan shares similarities also with some Syrian churches.[344]

2.5 Dara/Anastasiopolis

Dara/Anastasiopolis (modern Oğuz) was a newly built Late Antique city. Both its foundation by Anastasius (505–507) and refortification (around 530) by Justinian are exceptionally well documented.[345] Dara is different from the other cities of the region in that it continued its life as a mere village. Hence it has substantial

[340] A. Coşkun, 'Zerzevan Castle in the Light of Recent Archaeological Researches', *Anatolia* 43 (2017): 91–110.

[341] B. Pitarakis, *Hayat Kısa, Sanat Uzun—Bizans'ta Şifa Sanatı/Life Is Short, Art Long—The Art of Healing in Byzantium, Exhibiton Catalogue* (İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2015), cat. no. 112.

[342] Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, 22.

[343] For Norhut, see Section 2.3.2, 'Around Edessa'.

[344] Such as Ksedjbeh, the west church of Kasr Iblisu and the Church of St. Sergius in Dar Kita. See H. C. Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, ed. and compl. E. B. Smith (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology, 1929), ills. 47, 53, and 142 respectively.

[345] Malalas, *Chronographia*, 399; Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.2; Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii.6.

remains from Late Antiquity that are relatively well preserved. It has attracted the attention of scholars since the beginning of the twentieth century, and there is a substantial bibliography on it.[346] Dara was built not just as an ordinary fort for defensive purposes, but as a well-planned city with classical features, like the few Byzantine cities newly built in the sixth century, namely Resafa, Zenobia, and Justiniana Prima. While it was smaller than other cities in Roman Mesopotamia, such as Amida, Edessa, and Nisibis, Dara was larger than cities newly built in other provinces in the sixth century. Typically for a frontier city, it was fortified with strong walls.

Its foundation was requested by the Roman generals and commanders of Anastasius's army, who were blamed for their defeat by the Sasanians in Amida in 503. The generals defended themselves by saying that they did not have 'a place of refuge for rest, because the fortresses were remotely located and were too small to receive the army; and the water and other food supplies that were in them were not adequate'.[347] To rectify this situation, the generals urged the Emperor Anastasius to build a city 'as a place of refuge for the army and a resting place, for the preparation and storage of weapons'. These were the reasons for beginning the building of Dara in 505. At the time of its foundation, careful thought was given to the location of the new city. Some suggested Dara, others were in favour of ʿAmodin. The emperor Anastasius decided on Dara.[348] Accounts of the newly built city of Dara indicate a sustained planning process with the involvement of many people.

At intervals, Dara served as residence of the *dux* of Mesopotamia. In 530, Justinian's general Belisarius won his first victory over the Persians here and, in the same decade, Justinian refortified the city. In the war of 539 to 544, Dara resisted a Persian siege but in 573 it fell to the Persians. In 591 it was given back as part of the price that the deposed Persian king Khusrow II paid for the support he received from the Romans in his campaign to recover his throne. In 606, the Persians took the city once again, after eighteen months of siege. Dara changed hands again in 628, as a result of the victorious campaigns of Heraclius, but was permanently lost to the Arabs in 639.[349] For the period after the Arab conquest, the East Syrian inscriptions in the necropolis are the main evidence.[350]

[346] For a bibliography of the research on the city, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan with a contribution by A. Palmer: E. Keser-Kayaalp and N. Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara/Anastasiopolis', in *New Cities in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Rizos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 153–75. Some parts of the following section are from that article. I thank Nihat Erdoğan for his permission to use the material in this context.

[347] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii, 6, a.

[348] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii, 6, b.

[349] Croke and Crow, 'Procopius and Dara', 143–59, 150–1.

[350] These inscriptions are being prepared for publication by Andrew Palmer.

Dara, which was founded on the site of a small village for the protection of Amida, later received a foundation story, which explained the local name Dara. According to Malalas, Alexander the Great founded the city and it was here that he had captured Darius, the king of Persia.[351] While being incorrect, the story has symbolic value as it refers to centuries-old Greco–Persian relations. Malalas also reports that Dara had two public baths, churches, colonnades, warehouses for storing grain, cisterns for water, and statues of Anastasius.[352] This shows that Dara was given all the features that a city should have. Enrico Zanini points out that the main characteristics of a city in the sixth century were aqueducts, cisterns, baths, public buildings, churches, and residences for public authorities, which are mentioned frequently in the sources, as well as fortification walls. He also thinks that the four newly built cities of Resafa, Zenobia, Justiniana Prima, and Dara could be considered part of the classical, Greco-Hellenistic and Roman urban tradition, since they were planned by architects and engineers in Constantinople according to a basic conceptual model, which was locally adapted to the specific needs of each settlement.[353]

Today, Dara is a small village known officially as Oğuz, mostly built of reused materials from the Late Antique buildings. Although there are considerable archaeological remains on the site, property issues, lack of financial resources, and security problems made excavations in the site a difficult endeavour. However, in 2020, excavations started again with a large team.[354] The layout of Dara followed the topographical features, which resulted in an amorphous shape (Fig. 2.5.1). The walls of Dara, which are 2.8 kilometres long, have received considerable scholarly attention.[355] The identification of the phases in which it was built, by Anastasius or Justinian, have been the main concern of most archaeologists. Brian Croke and James Crow studied the walls of the city in relation to the accounts of Procopius, who accompanied Justinian's general Belisarius in 529–539. According to them, Procopius's accounts in *On Buildings*

[351] Malalas, *Chronographia*, 224. [352] Malalas, *Chronographia*, 399.

[353] Zanini, 'The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning', 196–223, 209. Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance*, 395–444.

[354] In 1986, Malik Ekmen, then deputy director of Mardin Museum, together with the late Professor Metin Ahunbay of Istanbul Technical University as scientific advisor, initiated the excavations in Dara. Excavations continued with this team until 1990 and then stopped because of the political conditions in the region. Two short reports of these excavations have been published: Ahunbay, 'Dara-Anastasiopolis', XII, 391–7 and Ahunbay, 'Dara-Anastasiopolis', XIII, 197–204. Between 2001 and 2009, further excavations were conducted by the then director of Mardin Museum, Songül Ceylan Bala, again in collaboration with Ahunbay. In 2009, due to new regulations by the Ministry of Culture, the Museum of Mardin became solely responsible for the excavations. The work of the museum at Dara had been intermittent. In 2020, excavations started again and Hüseyin Metin from Kafkas University is the current head of the excavations.

[355] Furlan, *Accertamenti a Dara*; Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture*, 80–8; Croke and Crow, 'Procopius and Dara'; Crow, 'Dara, a late Roman Fortress'; M. Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Dara', in *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, ed. P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (Oxford: BAR, 1986), 737–83.

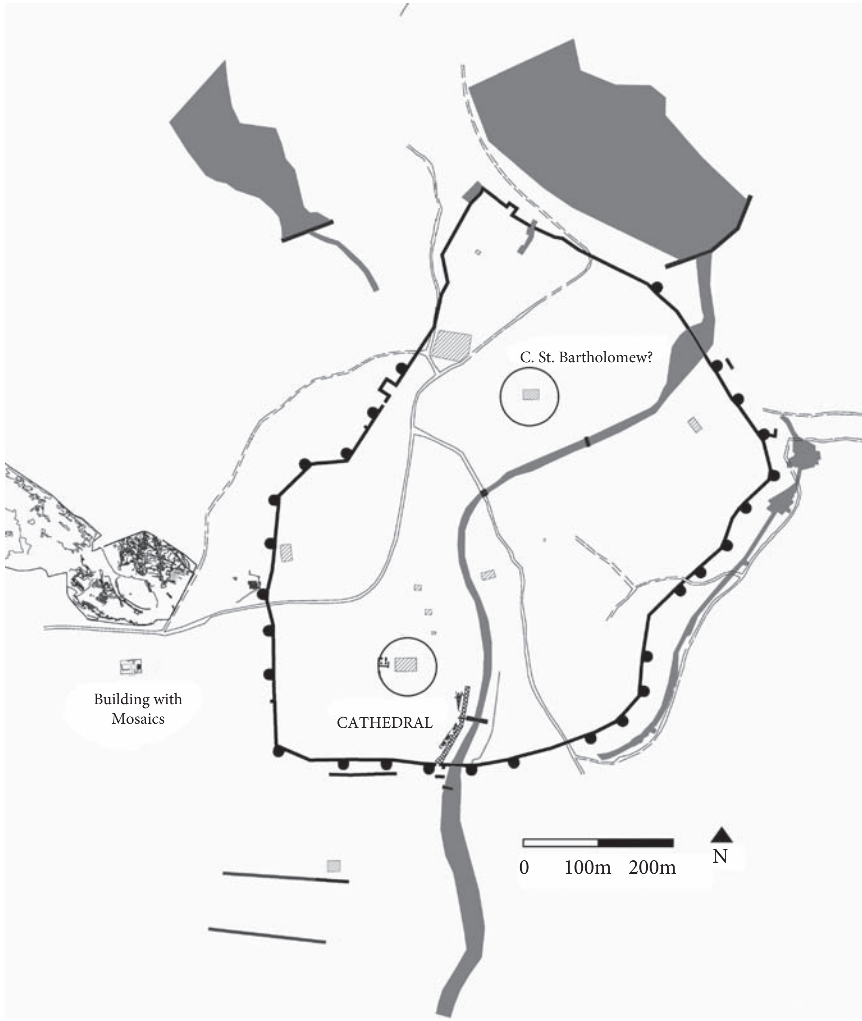

Fig. 2.5.1 Layout of Dara
Source: By the author after the plan of Mardin Museum.

are 'distorted and exaggerated'.[356] By contrast, Michael Whitby argued that Procopius could be trusted up to a certain point.[357] Despite any reservations one may have, it is impossible to ignore his accounts, which are significant in so many ways. On the one hand, Croke and Crow may be right when they claim that

[356] Croke and Crow, 'Procopius and Dara'.

[357] Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Dara'.

Procopius exaggerates the extent of Justinian's building activity at Dara, but on the other hand, Zanini has convincingly argued for a substantial Justinianic construction phase in the walls of Dara.[358]

Inside the walls of Dara, the most significant feature is the River Cordes, which flows from north to south, dividing the city in two. The surviving remains give the impression that the region to the west of the Cordes was reserved for public buildings, whereas that to the east, which features hardly any remains, may have been for domestic structures. In the cities of Northern Mesopotamia there was a continuation of the Greek and Roman street planning tradition with an orthogonal street grid. In Nisibis, Amida, Edessa, Constantia, and Martyropolis the main roads still follow the alignment of the ancient *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus*. During his excavations, Ahunbay uncovered a rectangular structure composed of L-shaped piers,[359] which he tentatively identified as a tetrapylon. Tetrapyla are a significant feature of classical cities, usually marking the intersection of the main streets, and their existence is known in Amida and Constantia.[360] In Dara, a colonnaded street that is parallel to the river has been excavated.[361] The street probably continued further north, linking all the monumental structures to the west of it.

In a central location in the city, on an artificial terrace, a three-storied structure has been identified as a *praetorium*.[362] However, as we shall mention below, another building, with remarkable mosaics, may have been the *praetorium*. The so-called *praetorium* may have been part of the episcopal complex. Between it and the cathedral are remains of another monumental structure, the function of which has not yet been determined. Other structures to which Ahunbay refers are a ditch, a water distribution system, and a small pool outside the north-eastern tower.[363] Both inside and outside the city walls, the city had a sophisticated water management system with dams, canals, cisterns, and aqueducts.[364]

To the west of the city are five quarries in the shape of pockets of rock from which the stone, used for the building of the city, was extracted (Fig. 2.5.1). The one closest to the city was used as a necropolis (Fig. 2.5.2).[365] The monumental rock-carved chamber located in the western end of the necropolis has received scholarly attention in the past because of the distinctive sculpture on its

[358] Zanini, 'The Urban Ideal', 20, fn. 21. [359] Ahunbay, 'Dara', XIII, 199.

[360] For the former, see Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, Chronicle, x, 0, a, and for the latter, see Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 155, pls. 87–8.

[361] Shops have been excavated alongside this street where coins of Justinian, Justin II, Tiberius II, Constantine, and Phocas have been found. Personal communication with Nihat Erdoan from the Mardin Museum (July 2011).

[362] Zanini, 'The Urban Ideal', 210. [363] Ahunbay, 'Dara', XIII, 198.

[364] Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 160–1.

[365] For more information about the excavation of the museum in this area, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 168–74.

Fig. 2.5.2 Aerial view of the necropolis/quarry
Source: Courtesy of Mardin Museum.

entrance.[366] The sculpture is composed of two parts. The scene on the left, including a figure with a tunic and a number of skulls, clearly depicts Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones. To the right of this scene is a rectangular frame with an amorphous shape inside it. Mundell Mango suggested that the amorphous shape on the left represented fire—more specifically Nebuchadnezzar's Burning Fiery Furnace—and interpreted the figures under the pediment as the three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace (Fig. 2.5.3). However, Nicholson suggests another Old Testament scene including fire, namely the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai, 'from the flames of which God first gave Moses his commission to deliver his people out of captivity and lead them into the Promised Land'.[367]

[366] Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmaler*, pl. 60, O. Nicholson, 'Two Notes on Dara', *AJA* 89 (1985): 663–71, 667–71 and M. Mundell, 'A Sixth Century Funerary Relief at Dara in Mesopotamia', in *JÖB* 24 (1975): 209–27, 212–17.

[367] Mundell, 'A Sixth Century Funerary Relief', 216; Nicholson, 'Two Notes on Dara', 670. Based on the iconography of the sculpture in the entrance of the chamber, there have so far been two suggestions about who was buried there. Mundell has suggested that after Dara was taken by the Persians in 573, its inhabitants were led off to exile in Persia. She suggests that those who returned, after Dara was given back to Romans in 591, may have chosen to be buried together in a chamber, whose iconography is associated with their own return from exile (Mundell, 'A Sixth Century Funerary Relief', 227). Nicholson also thinks that the chamber was probably built by those who returned from exile but argues that it was built for the fallen soldiers in the battle in 573. In mentioning the Sasanian tradition of not burying the dead, he suggests that the inhabitants returning from exile found the bones of the deceased soldiers lying around on the terraces of the necropolis, which are suitable for laying the

Fig. 2.5.3 Entrance to the burial chamber in the necropolis

The chamber is entered through an arched doorway under the sculpture. The entrance level is arranged like a gallery and looks over the main area, which has a floor area of around 140 square metres. During the excavations, another storey below the main area was discovered. The ceiling of the lower level is constructed with moveable slabs. This, together with the piles of bones in some areas, may suggest that some skeletons were thrown down from the upper level. It seems that when the lower level was filled up to the staircase, people did not go down but left their lamps at the entrance of the staircase, as many lamps have been found in that location. The fact that some burials in other parts of the necropolis were empty may suggest a practice of exhumation.[368]

The middle layer of the chamber has a square layout with four arcosolia on each side, and in these arcosolia there are multiple burials. The upper gallery was

bodies, and built this chamber to commemorate them. The Ezekiel text in fact depicts the Valley of Dry Bones as a 'vast battlefield strewn with the bones of men long dead' (Nicholson, 'Two Notes on Dara', 669). Thus it is plausible that, as Nicholson suggested, those whose bones were deposited were not the returned exiles but those who had fallen in battle. The bones that Ezekiel revived were also an army but the symbolic importance of Ezekiel's vision of death and afterlife may have been the main emphasis here, and thus the bones may have not necessarily belonged to the soldiers. Mundell argues that the graphic image at the Ezekiel scene suggests that 'the sculptor was acquainted with similar heaps of bones'. She thought this was a result of their being introduced, during their exile years, to the Sasanian custom of exposing their dead (Mundell, 'A Sixth Century Funerary Relief', 215).

[368] For more information on the finds here and for a plan and section, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 174.

probably used for ritual purposes. In the south-west corner of the upper gallery there is a high shaft, becoming narrower at the top. There are traces of smoke in this shaft and inside the chamber. The smoke and the burned bones are more likely to be due to an accidental fire and the shaft is for ventilation. The existence of bones of women and children in the lower level may indicate that it was a public ossuary where the exhumed bones were stored over the decades or maybe centuries. Whether that was the case from the beginning or whether the place was to commemorate the soldiers initially and was turned into a public ossuary later is difficult to tell.

The sources mention only two churches in Dara: the Great Church and the Church of St. Bartholomew. According to Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, the bishop Eutychian went to Constantinople, and Anastasius gave him gifts of holy vessels and gold for the building of the Great Church.[369] The Church of St. Bartholomew is also usually ascribed to Anastasius.[370] However, Procopius claims that both the cathedral and the Church of St. Bartholomew were built by Justinian.[371] In fact, one may consider that their construction might have taken a long time and could have seen the reigns of both emperors. There are remains in the city that can be associated with these two churches. We also mention the building with mosaics here as one should not rule out the possibility that it was a church.

2.5.1 Building with Mosaics

When first excavated in 2007, a large structure with mosaics, located around 200 metres south-west of the south-western corner of the city walls, was thought to be a church (Fig. 2.5.4, Fig. 2.5.1 for its location). This is a prominent structure with two rooms in its eastern part paved with mosaics. The one in the middle, which is well preserved, features a representation of a figure sitting on a rock with a dog, two sheep, and a goat beside him (Fig. 2.5.5). The man is identified by a one-word Greek inscription as a shepherd. The centre of the mosaic is occupied by an eleven-line Greek inscription. The names Maros and Sabas, appearing on the handles of the tabula ansata frame of the inscription, are probably the names of the mosaicists. The inscription reads:

> It was funded and founded and paved with mosaics according to God from the (monies) of our most pious and Christ-loving emperor Anastasius; at the

[369] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii.6.f–g.

[370] Theodore Lector, *Theodoros Anagnostes, Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), II, 57. John Diakrinomenos reports that the apostle appeared to this emperor in a dream and offered to protect the city. Thus, his relics were brought from Cyprus and deposited in one of Dara's new churches (Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 65). Malalas and Evagrius Scholasticus also ascribe the churches of Dara to Anastasius (Malalas, *Chronographia*, 399; Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London: Methuen, 1898), III. 38.

[371] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.3.26.

Fig. 2.5.4 Aerial view of the 'Building with mosaics'
Source: Courtesy of Mardin Museum.

command of the most glorious Daethos, locum tenens of the most illustrious Praetorian Prefects; and by the care of the men most dear to God, who presided over the most sacred church of Amida; in the years of Eutychianos, the most holy bishop of Anastasioupolis, while the administrators of this (city) were Abraamos and Thomas, the God-fearing priests. In the month of Dios, Indiction 8, of the (year) 826 (October 514). To the glory of God the Father and of his Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Makimos.[372]

The information in the inscription fits well with the accounts of the foundation of Dara in the chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor.[373] The bishop Eutychian mentioned in the inscription was appointed by Anastasius as the first bishop of

[372] Translation by Palmer. For the Greek and more details, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 167.

[373] 'Dara was named Anastasiopolis after the just emperor. He swore by his crown that no statement of accounts would be required from Thomas and his church, neither by him nor by any who became emperor after him. [Thomas] appointed and consecrated as the first bishop of [the new city] the priest Eutychian, a conscientious man who was experienced in business, and he gave the privilege to collect alms to his church from the authority of the church of Amida. John, a Roman soldier from Amida, was assigned to him. Eutychian tonsured him and made him a priest and master of the *xenodocheion*. When [Thomas] went to the imperial city he came with him. When [Eutychian] was presented to the emperor, [Anastasius] gave an endowment to his church. Abraham bar Kaili from Telmidê, the son of Ephraem of Constantia, who was at the time the notary assigned to Bishop Eutychian, was also made a priest and was sent to become the supervisor over the works and the construction of the public bath, and eventually became steward of the church. The emperor gave to Eutychian gifts of sacred vessels and gold for the building of the great church to be built in the city and sent him off. The bishop lived a little while longer and then he died. Then after him Thomas bar ʿAbdiya, who was a soldier from Reshʿaina, became [bishop]. He was the steward of the church of Amida, and he too was watchful and experienced with regard to business matters.' (Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii.6.f–g). When Rist wrote his

Fig. 2.5.5 Mosaics in the 'Building with mosaics'
Source: Courtesy of Mardin Museum.

article about the meticulous recording of Dara by Pseudo-Zachariah, the mosaic had not been excavated. This discovery supports his arguments that Pseudo-Zacharias was an important source for sixth-century Mesopotamia, providing eyewitness accounts. J. Rist, 'Der Bau der ostsyrischen Stadt Dara (Anastasiupolis): Überlegungen zum Eigengut in der Kirchengeschichte des Ps.-Zacharias Rhetor', in *Syriaca II*, ed. M. Tamcke (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004), 243–66.

Dara. The Abraamos mentioned in the inscription is probably Abraham bar Kaili, mentioned by Pseudo-Zachariah who was the notary assigned to the bishop. Thomas, also listed as priest and administrator, must be the Thomas bar ʻAbdiya mentioned by Pseudo-Zachariah, steward of the church of Amida who was ʻwatchful and experienced in regards to business matters'. Pseudo-Zachariah does not mention Daethos, locum tenens of the Praetorian Prefect, which is an important contribution to Byzantine Prosopography by this mosaic.

The function of the building with mosaics is unclear. Although the tripartite arrangement in the east and the east–west orientation of the building recalls a church, the inscription on the mosaic is not arranged to be read from the hall to the west of it. In addition, the inscription and the figure are designed to be looked at from two different sides, south (inscription) and north (the figure). Palmer who has studied the inscription and the mosaic for the museum has suggested that the building was a guest-house (*xenodocheion*) belonging to the cathedral church of Dara. He thinks the iconography supports this.[374] In fact, this iconography can be found in many different contexts.[375] When the depiction is read in a secular context, it may represent a pastoral scene, an idyllic environment. The presence of goats and sheep could also suggest wealth. These alternative meanings do not rule out the hospice as a function but make other options possible as well. If the building was a guest-house, it is curious that despite its perfect accord with the accounts of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, John, the master of the guest-house mentioned in the accounts of Pseudo-Zachariah,[376] is not mentioned in the inscription.

In the inscription, the Praetorian Prefect is mentioned right after the emperor. This may lead us to suggest that the building was a *praetorium*. According to Luke Lavan, *praetoria* were usually located in the provincial capitals, and they were not

[374] In Matthew, Chapter 25, Verses 31–46, Christ is described separating ʻmen into two groups, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left'. Then Christ says to those on his right hand: ʻYou have my Father's blessing; come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made. For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help, when in prison you visited me.' Then when the righteous asks, ʻwhen did this happen?' Christ replies, ʻanything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me' (From A. Palmer's preliminary report to the Mardin Museum).

[375] For example, in the north wall of the central nave of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, or on a sarcophagus lid from Rome, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends: Studien zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1966), 40). The iconography also has many parallels in classical and secular art, for example on a Justinianic silver dish in the Hermitage Museum (A. Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums* (Leningrad: Aurora, 1985), pl. 55). It also recalls the Orpheus mosaic from Edessa dating to the second century. For an image, see https://dma.org/art-deaccessioned-artworks/orpheus-taming-wild-animals.

[376] When the bishop Eutychian went to Constantinople, he presented his guestmaster, John, to the emperor (Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii.6.g).

only residences but also public buildings.[377] Dara was elevated to a metropolitan see, probably after Resafa became one in 514,[378] meaning in or after 514. The mosaic is dated to 514 and the building may have been built just after its status was raised.

Today, only a part of the building is excavated but the aerial photograph shows that its remains stretch further south and east. The uncovered walls show that the building was an almost 70-metre-long complex composed of multiple spaces around an inner court, thus resembling architecturally the other two epigraphically confirmed Late Antique *praetoria*, namely the northern *praetorium* in Caesarea Maritima and the *praetorium* in Gortyn. At the *praetorium* in Caesarea, there is a floor inscription mentioning the judicial or financial assistants of the governor.[379] In the inscription of Dara, clergy are mentioned, but when the inscription is brought together with the account of Pseudo-Zachariah we see that the clergy are praised as able administrators. Dara was also a customs post on the Byzantine side and it may well have had such an administrative building with offices at the entrance of the city from the west.

Although it does not help us to securely determine the function of the building, the inscription in the mosaic of the building is important. It is not only an addition to the small number of imperial building inscriptions that have survived in frontier forts in Mesopotamia,[380] but also the information in the inscription is in surprising harmony with the information in a sixth-century chronicle. The mosaic is remarkable also for its figural decoration. There are only three more floor mosaics with human figures in Northern Mesopotamia: in Haleplibahçe, Edessa (Urfa), where fifth-century mosaics depicting hunting Amazons were found in a secular building,[381] in a *bēth qadishe* in Constantia, and in a recently excavated church in Gola near Göktaş.[382]

However, the possibility that this building was a church should not be ruled out. Discussion on the function of the al-Mundir building in Resafa, which is also located by a necropolis, is especially relevant in this respect. As there is a personal acclamation in the apse of the building, it has been argued that it was an audience chamber. However, recent scholarship has returned to the first identification of it as a church. In addition, Elizabeth Key Fowden has argued that churches were used for a range of activities other than liturgical. As an example, she points to the account of Theophylact who mentions that Khusrow II stayed in the church

[377] L. Lavan, 'The Praetoria of Civil Governors in Late Antiquity', in *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism*, ed. L. Lavan and W. Bowden (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001), 39–56, 45.

[378] E. Honigmann, 'Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VIe siècle', *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol 127, Subsidia, tome 2* (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), 104.

[379] Lavan, 'The Praetoria of Civil Governors', figs, 1 and 4.

[380] Gathered in Mango and Mango, 'Inscriptions de la Mésopotamie du Nord'.

[381] Karabulut, Önal, and Dervişoğlu, *Haleplibahçe Mozaikleri*.

[382] For the latter two, see Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia'.

premises of Dara when he was waiting to gain his throne back. She also notes that in 497/8, Alexander, the governor of Edessa 'established a reform by sitting in judgement every Friday in the martyrium of St. John the Baptist and St. Addai the Apostle'.[383] Like the al-Mundir building in Resafa, an inscription which has more secular connotations may be a result of places which integrated both secular and the sacred.[384] Some of the churches in Antioch also seemed to have been used for activities other than liturgical.[385]

2.5.2 Cathedral

The cistern in the centre of the city (Fig. 2.5.6), which has been called by the locals 'the prison', was most probably the substructure of the cathedral. The foundations of the apse to the east, the baptismal font to the north of the cistern, a crypt with a flat roof just next to the font, fragments of an *opus sectile* pavement surviving around it, and finally its relatively central location in the city, all indicate that the building standing on top of this cistern was of considerable importance. Locating cisterns under churches was a common practice in Late Antiquity. The cistern of the cathedral is a monumental structure that has received considerable scholarly attention in the past. The strongest parallels to it are in Resafa.[386] The niche head that lay detached and close to the cathedral but later was inserted into the exterior wall of one of the houses has sculpture also similar to those at Resafa (Fig. 2.5.7). So parallels between these two cities are noteworthy in many ways.

For the windows of the cistern on the west wall to be above the ground, the original floor level to the west of the church must have been approximately the same level as it is today. This means that the entrance to the church was from an upper level, as has already been suggested in the past.[387] Recently, a floor pavement and remains of another monumental structure were excavated in the area to the south of the cathedral. These excavations revealed mosaic tesserae of gold, silver, and other coloured glass, pieces of pottery, and glass that have not been studied yet. A commemorative inscription was also excavated near the cathedral.

[383] Chronicle of Edessa, 29. [384] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 165–7.

[385] Mayer and Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 228–9.

[386] Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmaler*, pl. 58. I. Furlan, 'Oikema Katagheion. Una Problematica Struttura a Dara', in *Milion 1. Collana di studi e ricerche d'Arte Bizantina*, ed. C. Barsanti et al. (Roma: Biblioteca di Storia Patria: 1988), 105–27; G. Brands, 'Ein Baukomplex in Dara-Anastasiopolis', *JAC* 47 (2004): 144–55. In terms of its plan and arrangement with lateral piers, the cistern under the cathedral is similar to the great cistern in Resafa (W. Brinker, 'Zur Wasserversorgung von Resafa-Sergiopolis', *DM* 5 (1991): 119–46, fig. 4), the cistern to the south of Nea church in Jerusalem (N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984, fig. 279) and the cistern in the Monastery of St. Euthymius in the Judaean desert (Y. Hirschfeld, 'Euthymius and his Monastery in the Judean Desert', *Liber Annuus* 43 (1993): 339–71; pls. 19–24, fig. 5.

[387] Brands, 'Ein Baukomplex', 153. For examples of some churches with monumental stairs in their entrances, see Jacobs, *Aesthetic Maintenance*, 328.

Fig. 2.5.6 Cistern under the cathedral

It recorded the names of a number of priests. A title given to one of these is otherwise only attested to in East Syrian sources. The congregation that owned the cathedral may therefore have been East Syrian for a number of years. The most likely periods for this are between 573 and 591 and from 604 to 614/5.[388]

On the south façade of the cistern, there is an arcade supporting a cantilever that used to carry the walls of the upper structure. Behind that arcade, one can see a wide arch and a substantial wall of the cistern (Fig. 2.5.8). As we mentioned, ancient sources attribute the Great Church either to Anastasius or Justinian. The cistern and the cathedral may have been built separately, the former in the time of Anastasius and the latter in the time of Justinian, as has already been suggested by Whitby, based on textual accounts.[389]

[388] Andrew Palmer is preparing the publication of this inscription together with Hüseyin Metin, head of the excavations. Personal communication, 21 November 2020.

[389] Procopius discusses two cisterns built by the emperor Justinian, one close to the Church of St. Bartholomew and another between the circuit wall and *proteichisma* (outer fortification) (Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.2.1). Whitby suggested that the reason why Procopius does not mention the cistern under the cathedral is because it was the work of Anastasius. He thinks Procopius rather talks about the Great Church that lies above it because it was built by the Emperor Justinian on top of an existing cistern (Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Dara', 776).

Fig. 2.5.7 Loose niche head close to the cathedral

Guyer suggested that there existed a *prothesis* and a *diakonikon* in the church, which would correspond to the small corner rooms in the cistern.[390] The excavations in the eastern part of the church show that the eastern arrangement was more complicated than that. It is not yet possible to suggest a definite plan for it. The foundations of a five-sided polygonal apse are clear and remarkable when the parallels elsewhere in the Empire are considered.[391] On the south wall of the polygonal apse, an archway is visible, which hints at a space under the apse, most probably a crypt, which is above the level of the ceiling of the cistern and to the

[390] Guyer, 'Amida', 213.

[391] The polygonal apse is a feature that we come across mostly, but not exclusively, in the early churches of Constantinople. Polygonal apses from the fourth century were found in Cyprus and North Italy. In the late fourth and fifth centuries they started to appear in Constantinople and Asia Minor. In the sixth century, they became more common in Asia Minor, Greece, Cyprus, the Aegean Islands, and the Balkans. We also find a few in Palestine and Syria (for a summary, see U. Serin, *Early Christian and Byzantine Churches at Iasos in Caria: An Architectural Survey* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2004), 47). For a recent analysis of the distribution of the polygonal apses with maps, see A. Graziadei, 'Polygonal Apse as a Peculiar Feature of Architecture in Late Antiquity. A Study on the Typologies and the Diffusion between the Fourth and the Sixth Century', *Mediterranea* XVI (2019): 47–73. Graziadei did not include the three polygonal apses in Northern Mesopotamia in his analysis. They are the cathedral of Dara (five-sided), the church at Ambar (three-sided) and Mor Yaʿqub in Ṣālaḥ (five-sided). Polygonal apses became popular in the sixth century, and all examples from our region are from the sixth century. Graziadei thinks the five-sided apses are less associated with the east. The concentration of three examples in this small region and having both three-sided and five-sided apses is notable.

Fig. 2.5.8 Lower level of the cathedral

east.[392] The overall dimensions of the church above the cistern show similarities with the early basilicas of Chalkoprateia and the Studios church in Constantinople, and St. Sophia in Nicaea.[393] Thus, a possible reconstruction of the church may be as a three-aisled basilica with interior colonnades resting on the end of the engaged piers of the cistern (Fig. 2.5.9).

Another option for the reconstruction may be a domed-basilica, which the squarish layout strongly suggests. Although the foundations of the church (the cistern) may at first glance appear to be contradicting a domed arrangement, as Slobodan Ćurčić has argued, when domes began to be built, there was conservatism in terms of foundations.[394] It has been argued that the domed basilicas originated in a centre other than Constantinopolis. There have been suggestions

[392] Crypts under apses were also common features in early Constantinopolitan churches, but again not confined to them. In some cases, like the Church of St. Ioannes in the Hebdomon and St. Polyeuktos, the crypt could be reached from the outside (T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 109), and that might have been the case at Dara. For crypts elsewhere, see J. P. Sodini, 'Les crypts d'autel paléochrétiennes: essai de classification', *TM* 8 (1981): 437–58.

[393] Mathews, *The Early Churches*, fig. 12.

[394] S. Ćurčić, 'Design and Structural Innovation in Byzantine Architecture before Hagia Sophia', in *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present*, ed. A. Çakmak and R. Mark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16–38, 25, 36. For later Constantinopolitan churches including cisterns in their foundations, see Ousterhout, *Master Builders*, 165 and for the danger of reconstructing the plan of a church according to the substructure, 167.

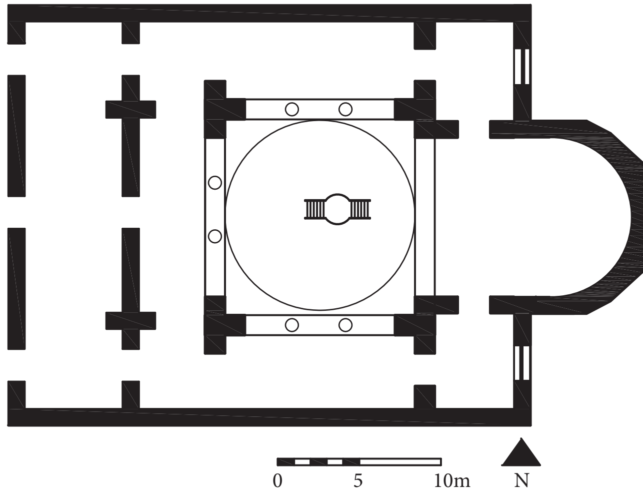

Fig. 2.5.9 Hypothetical reconstruction of the plan of the cathedral

that the Isaurian and Cilician churches were the prototypes of this plan type. In fact, the region was an innovative place for church architecture in that period. After Zeno, there was a decline in the number of constructions in Isauria and Isaurian builders travelled to different parts of the Empire between 501 and 551 for work.[395] Dara probably attracted many Isaurians to work in its construction.[396] The outlines of the Dara cathedral are similar in dimension to the Cupola church at Seleucia at Cilicia.[397] In terms of the design, it may also have been like the Domed Basilica at Meryemlik (*c.*471–494).[398] The domed-basilica plan was further developed in the time of Justinian and if in fact Justinian built the cathedral of Dara, it might have been a developed version of the type.

2.5.3 Church of St. Bartholomew

According to Procopius, the Church of St. Bartholomew stood 'close' to a cistern to the west of the city.[399] There are remains of a subterranean structure just by the western walls. The springing of one of the five vaults that used to cover this space and an interior pier still survives. Furlan reconstructed the cistern with five rows

[395] C. Mango, 'Isaurian Builders', in *Polychronion/Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75 Geburtstag*, ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1966), 358–65.

[396] S. Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches of Cilicia and Isauria* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 8.

[397] Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches*, fig. 44.

[398] Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches*, 226–34.

[399] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.2.1.

of columns and with dimensions of 12.5 metres x 13.5 metres.[400] There are no substantial structures around this so-called cistern to be identified as a church and the cistern is too small to have had a church on top of it.

The cistern that Procopius mentions must be the large ten-part cistern.[401] Wiessner recorded a structure in its vicinity, which was locally known as a church,[402] and to this day the area around it is still known as Kilise mahallesi (church district). Wiessner describes the plan of the so-called church as a combination of the hall-type and the transverse-hall-type churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[403] In fact, with its inscribed apse, it shows similarities with many churches, especially in Syria.[404] What is unusual is that the central room is also a rectangle with no trace of a curvilinear apse, in that way similar to the churches of the East Syrians. Its location near the main road axis, which passed by the cathedral and baptistery, suggests that this was an important ecclesiastical building. The fact that it is near the cistern in the north-west somehow agrees with the description of Procopius. Today the structure is located in a private property surrounded by gardens, and I was not given permission to record it.

2.5.4 Around Dara

Recent excavations uncovered both buildings and traces of additional city walls to the south of Dara. The earlier settlement, on which it is recorded that Dara was built, may have been in this area, too.[405] Remains found in the area between Dara and Ambar, located 2 kilometres south of Dara, show that we can regard the remarkable church at Ambar as a suburban structure. Although it has a plan type (Fig. 2.5.10) that seems to have been used exclusively for monastic churches (Fig. 3.3.10), its function as a monastic church has been questioned mainly because of its proximity to the battlefield.

It is indeed surprising to find such a monumental church in a military zone. As we said, it has the plan type of the monastic churches of the region and has buildings surrounding it, turning it into a religious complex. It has been suggested that the church of Ambar had a military function or was built to commemorate

[400] I. Furlan, 'Cisterne a Dara', in *Milion 3. Arte profana e arte sacra a Bisanzio*, ed. A. Iacobini and E. Zanini (Roma: Argos, 1995), 51–63, fig. 19.

[401] For a photograph, see C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (London: Faber/Electa, 1976, reprint 1986), 27, fig. 26.

[402] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/1, 233, II/2 abb. XXX, 119–22.

[403] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/1, 233. For a reproduction, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 160, fig. 6.

[404] See Section 2.6.1, 'The Basilica'.

[405] For more on this, see Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 165.

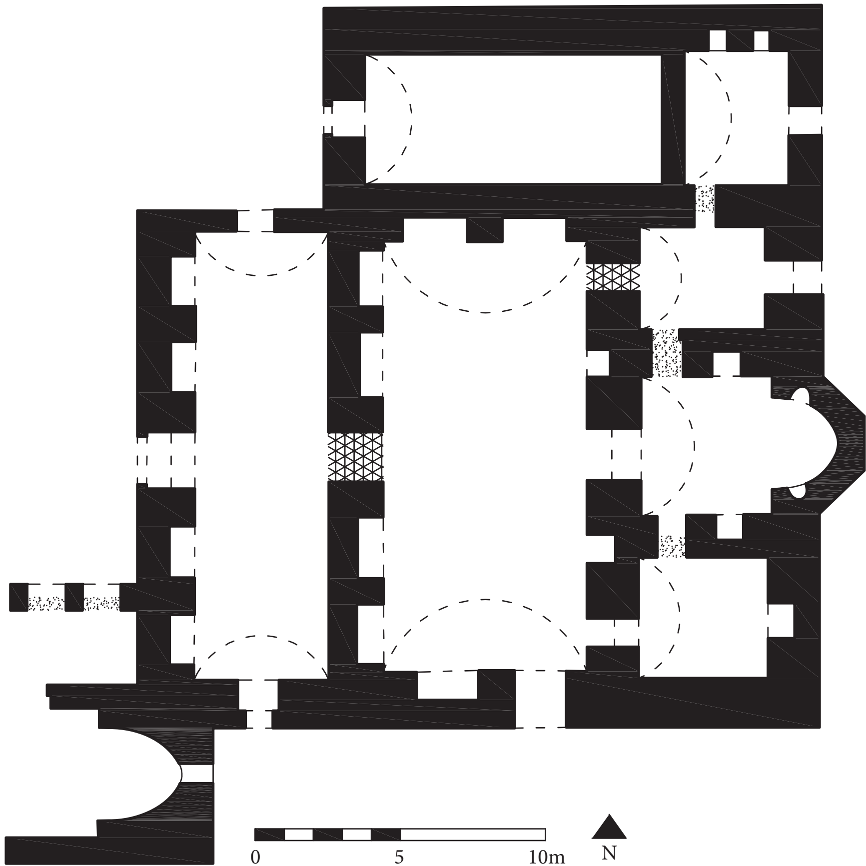

Fig. 2.5.10 Plan of the church at Ambar
Source: Redrawn by S. Kayasü after Mundell Mango.

the victory of 530.[406] Whitby argues that Ambar might have served as a signalling post, 'since it is the nearest point to Dara from which the citadel of Mardin is visible'[407] and it is located on a hill. His suggestion does not rule out the possibility that this structure was in fact part of a monastery. The monasteries seem to have been instrumental in providing security. As we shall mention in Section 3.3.1, the Monastery of Mor Gabriel has been identified as Banasimeon, one of the fortresses mentioned by Procopius.[408]

[406] C. Lillington-Martin, 'Archaeological and Ancient Literary Evidence for a Battle near Dara Gap, Turkey, AD 530', in *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, ed. A. S. Lewin and P. Pellegrini (Oxford: BAR, 2007), 310.

[407] Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Dara', fn. 12.

[408] Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie*, 229.

Mundell Mango suggested that the Ambar church was a parish church because it contains a structure she identified as a *bēth ṣlutho*, that is, an outdoor oratory that seems to be exclusively used in the village churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. However, the apse, which looks free-standing because of a roof built in the springing point of its apse archivolt, was in fact the apse of a chapel that you can enter in the ground level. The Ambar church is significant as a monastery church from the sixth century. Other monastery churches that have survived to the present have undergone numerous repairs as they still maintain their original function within active monasteries. Since the Ambar church has survived to the present in its original state, except for the later structures added to the building, it gives important information about the contemporary buildings attached to the church and the construction technique of the period. In other monasteries, the Late Antique structures around the main church building have disappeared. In Ambar, there is a small chapel with portico, sharing the same entrance courtyard with the main church. Similarly, a large room to the north of the main church whose function is undetermined gives at least some idea about the monastery as a complex of large structures besides the main church (Fig. 2.5.11). Today, the church is used as a barn and is in poor condition.

The church has a Greek inscription on the doorway leading to the apse. There are circular ornamentations below the inscription. The inscription includes a verse from psalm 24: 7: 'Lift up your heads, you gates! Be lifted up, you ancient doors!

Fig. 2.5.11 View of the church at Ambar from north-west

Open that the King of Glory may come in!'[409] It is one of the two Greek inscriptions which have survived in the transverse-hall-type churches of the region, the other being a two-word inscription in the apse mosaics of Mor Gabriel Monastery.

The Monastery of Mor Gabriel was built in the first decade of the sixth century. It is highly likely that the Ambar church was built around the same time. The main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel is the largest example of the transverse-hall-type church in the region. The Ambar church follows this church in terms of its scale. In Ṭur ʿAbdin, there are at least four monastic churches that can be dated to approximately the same period and have the same type of plan.[410] The polygonal apse reflects the apse of the cathedral in Dara. However, the Ambar church is not the only transverse church that has a polygonal apse. We see it used also in the main church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub in Ṣālaḥ, whose apse is five-sided.

The foundation of Dara had an impact on the neighbouring monasteries, such as the Monastery of Mor Gabriel. We shall mention below that this monastery received generous imperial benefaction. Given that the decoration of the sanctuary is unique in the region, and that it is of exceptionally high quality, it seems likely that it was executed by workmen who came from elsewhere. The sources report that workmen were summoned from all over the Empire in order to build Dara.[411] These clearly included skilled mosaicists, as demonstrated by the mosaics discovered in the building outside the walls of Dara and by quantities of tesserae made of gold, silver and other coloured glass, recently discovered in the area to the south-east of the cathedral. The reported construction date of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel and its mosaics (512) would fit well with a possible second wave of construction activities in Dara when the building with mosaics mentioned above was also built. As there is no parallel to Mor Gabriel's mosaic elsewhere in Ṭur ʿAbdin, it is highly likely that the imported craftsmen employed for the building of Dara also worked in the surrounding monasteries. Palmer argued that after Dara was built, the available manpower was used in the surrounding monasteries.[412] Mundell Mango has suggested that the main church of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran Monastery was built between 526 and 536 when there were new constructions in Dara.[413] Thus, one can argue that the construction and refortification of Dara had an impact on the surrounding settlements. The church at

[409] Mundell Mango, 'Deux églises de Mésopotamie du Nord', 47–70, 48.

[410] For more on the plans of the churches of the monasteries, see Chapter 3, Section 3.3, 'Monasteries'.

[411] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, vii, 6, d.

[412] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 123.

[413] M. Mundell, 'The Sixth Century Sculpture of the Monastery of Deir Zafaran in Mesopotamia', in *Actes du XVe Congrès International D'études Byzantines Athènes-1976* (Athenes: Association internationale des etudes byzantines, 1981), 511–28, 528.

Ambar, although built with a specifically Syrian type of church plan, might have been one of them.

2.6 Martyropolis

Martyropolis (Maypherqat in Syriac, Medieval Mayyafariqin, modern Silvan) was one of the major fortress towns on the frontier. According to tradition, it was founded by Marutha who was the son of a local governor. He later became the bishop of Martyropolis. Marutha was sent to Persia in 410 as a legate by the Roman Emperor to convene a synod with the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, during which the Council of Nicaea was officially accepted by the Persian bishops.[414] It was claimed that Marutha healed the son of the Sasanian shah Yazdgard.[415] However, most importantly, he developed diplomatic relations to ensure peace with Yazdgard. During his visit, Marutha was permitted to collect the bones of Christian martyrs in Persian territory and bring them back to the Roman Empire. Theodosius II, who was pleased with the results of this trip, and during whose time the cult of relics gained prominence, put his resources at the service of Marutha. This new city, built with the protection of the relics of the martyrs, was called Martyropolis. According to the Armenian *vita* of Marutha, Yazdgard also patronized Martyropolis with an inscribed gold cup filled with gold to subsidize the building project.[416] The different accounts show the importance of obtaining a balance in the relations and powers, [417] with some emphasizing the sole authority of Romans and others creating a link to the Persians. Arguably, the notion is in some way manifested in architecture.

The city had a strategic location, connecting the Black Sea with the Mesopotamian plain.[418] Due to its location between Armenia and Persia, it became a refuge for miaphysite monks. Key Fowden draws attention to the

[414] S. Brock, 'Marutha of Maypherqat', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. P. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 273. His *Life* does not exist in Syriac but Brock notes that the Armenian, Greek, and Arabic *Lives* all probably go back to lost Syriac sources. For the details see Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 50–2.

[415] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 55, fn. 46. Tannous notes that reports of holy men healing sick non-Christian rulers, or sick members of a non-Christian ruler's family, are common in Syriac hagiography, especially in east Syria. He lists the examples related to Muslim rulers: J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 2018), 369.

[416] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 54–6.

[417] According to the Armenian vita, Marutha got permission from Theodosius to collect relics of all the saints in the Byzantine Empire. The purpose of the account, according to Key Fowden, is to 'emphasize the universal Christian intent of Marutha's deeds'. In the Greek *Life*, only Persian Christian bones are mentioned. According to some accounts, Marutha went to Persia twice. The Greek sources do not mention episodes that would threaten the Byzantine emperor's role as the sole Christian emperor. Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 55–6.

[418] That is why it was identified as Tigranocerta in the past, but today, it is accepted that Arzen was the ancient Tigranocerta.

city's prominence: 'While from Constantinople Maypherqat appeared to lie at the eastern periphery of the Empire, one could also see it as the center of the known world, holding a delicate balance between the two great Empires and the considerable powers of Armenia and the Arabs to the north and south'.[419] In the early sixth century, it was the seat of the satrap of Sophanene. In 502, the city was besieged by the Persians. Emperor Anastasius pardoned the satrap after he surrendered the city to the Persians due to the weakness of its walls.[420] In 536, it became the metropolis of the new province of Armenia IV after Justinian suppressed the Armenian satrapies. Justinian rebuilt the walls and porticos.[421] A new duke was established there and the city was briefly called Justinianopolis.[422] In the Notitia Antiochena of the 580s, it was listed as a see under Amida. Although briefly occupied by the Persians between 589 and 591 following a betrayal by a local Roman commander, it was returned to the emperor Maurice by Khusrow II in 591, at the time when the Romans reinstated him as the Sasanian king. Lehmann-Haupt recorded a lengthy Greek inscription in the north-western corner of the city wall which he thought was written by an Armenian king.[423] This inscription is now lost. Cyril Mango shows that this inscription reflects the rhetoric of Khusrow II, emphasizing his generosity in returning the city that was founded on the relics of Persian martyrs.[424] The city was captured again by the Persians in 604, taken back by Heraclius in 625, and finally lost to the Arabs in 640. Between 990 and 1085, it was the capital of the Marwanid dynasty.

The most remarkable account of the city was written in 1176–77 by Ibn al-Azraq, a native of the city, who also included a detailed description of its Christian past.[425] Ibn al-Azraq's history differs from the Greek and Armenian lives of Marutha. According to him, it was Shapur's daughter whom Marutha healed. He claims that the city and its cathedral church were founded by Constantine the Great and his mother Helena. According to Harry Munt, this anachronistic addition is probably Ibn al-Azraq's interpolation. The mention of Shapur, not Yazdgard, dates the city earlier, and relating it to Constantine and Helena gives it greater importance. Linking it to both Roman emperors and Persian shahs also raises the stature of the city. As Munt argued, Ibn al-Azraq stood in a tradition of

[419] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 50.

[420] M. Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Martyropolis', *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984): 177–82, 177.

[421] Procopius gives descriptions. Procopius, *On Buildings*, 3.2.10–14. Whitby notes that Procopius's account on Justianian's building works in Martyropolis is generally accurate.

[422] Malalas, *Chronographia*, 629 (XVIII, 5).

[423] C. F. F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt* (Berlin: B. Behr, 1910), 410.

[424] Mango, 'Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse Sassanide', 91–104, 101–4.

[425] Harry Munt, 'Ibn al-Azraq, Saint Marutha, and the Foundation of Mayyafariqin (Martyropolis)', in *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, ed. A. Papaconstantinou, M. Debié, and H. Kennedy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 149–74.

authors who incorporated foundation narratives based in antiquity and descriptions of early buildings as they wrote about cities, and that is why he thinks Marutha was mentioned, not as a Christian saint, but as the founder of the city, together with Constantine.[426] This recollection of the distant past can also be noted in the medieval mosque architecture of the city, in which we find the continuation of the classical tradition.[427]

Together with Melitene (Malatya) and Theodosiopolis (Erzurum), Martyropolis was one of the strongly fortified cities of Armenia. The structure of the walls shows parallels with those of Amida. The best-preserved walls of the city are on the south and east sides, with traces of brick work in the towers like in Amida.[428] The layout of late antique Martyropolis was probably the same with the medieval city, a rectangle which is about 600 metres x 500 metres (Fig. 2.6.1). Like

Fig. 2.6.1 Layout of Martyropolis
Source: By the author after Gabriel.

[426] Munt, 'Ibn al-Azraq', 172–4.

[427] E. Keser-Kayaalp and L. Wheatley-Irving, 'Late Antique Architectural Sculpture at the Mayyāfāriqīn Mosque (Silvan Ulu Cami)', in *Central Periphery? Art, Culture and History of the Medieval Jazira (Northern Mesopotamia, 8th–15th Centuries)*, ed. L. Korn and M. Müller-Wiener (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2017), 125–51.

[428] Whitby, 'Procopius' Description of Martyropolis', 179.

the walls of Amida, the walls of the city have gone through significant Islamic rebuilding and many Arabic inscriptions were added to them.[429] As in other cities of Northern Mesopotamia, Martyropolis is located close to a water source, namely the river Nymphius (Batman Su).

Bell recorded two churches from this city which will be dealt with in detail below. Unfortunately, nothing has survived from these two churches. We know the names of other churches of the city from the accounts of Ibn al-Azraq, who recorded amongst other things what was standing in the city in his time: a suburban church dedicated to Mary, a great church on the summit of a hill (dedicated to Constantine and Helena?), a church of the Jacobites (church of Yoldath Aloho?), a church by the foot of the hill, a circular church, and a church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. Monasteries located close to the city are also mentioned, such as the monasteries of St. John the Baptist, Bar ʿIgra, Qawma, Hasun, and Hisn Hattah.[430] Mundell Mango thinks that the Church of SS. Peter and Paul was destroyed before 1911. The two churches recorded by Bell were the cathedral and the el ʿAdhra (ʻthe Jacobite church', i.e. the Church of Yoldath Aloho).[431] As will be seen below, the churches recorded in Martyropolis show some parallels with buildings in Resafa. It is not surprising when one considers the parallel development of the martyr cult in both cities and how, in each, both the Persians and the Romans tried to make use of it.[432]

2.6.1 The Basilica

The large basilica that was located to the north of the Silvan Great Mosque can be identified as the cathedral of the city.[433] Basilical church plans were common in early Byzantium for the purpose of congregational worship, with regional variations.[434] When C. F. F. Lehmann-Haupt visited the city in 1898, the church was largely preserved. He mentions the rich decoration of the interior, and reports that there were fifteen windows in the south elevation and two rows of four windows in the west wall.[435] When Bell visited the city in 1911, she recorded the outer walls, the inscribed protruding apse, the piers in the west end, and the location of the doors.[436]

The size of the nave (excluding the apse) was 38.65 metres x 25.75 metres. There are only a few basilicas in the East that are as monumental and as ancient as

[429] Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques*, 213–17, 209–30.
[430] J. M. Fiey, 'Martyropolis syriaque', *Le Muséon* 89 (1976): 5–38, 24–35.
[431] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 61–5, 123.
[432] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 59.
[433] Keser-Kayaalp and Wheatley-Irving, 'Late Antique Architectural Sculpture at the Mayyāfāriqīn Mosque', 126, fn. 10.
[434] For numerous variations, see C. Delvoye, 'Basilika', in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst 1* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966), 514–67. Also, see Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 101.
[435] Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, 422.
[436] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 59.

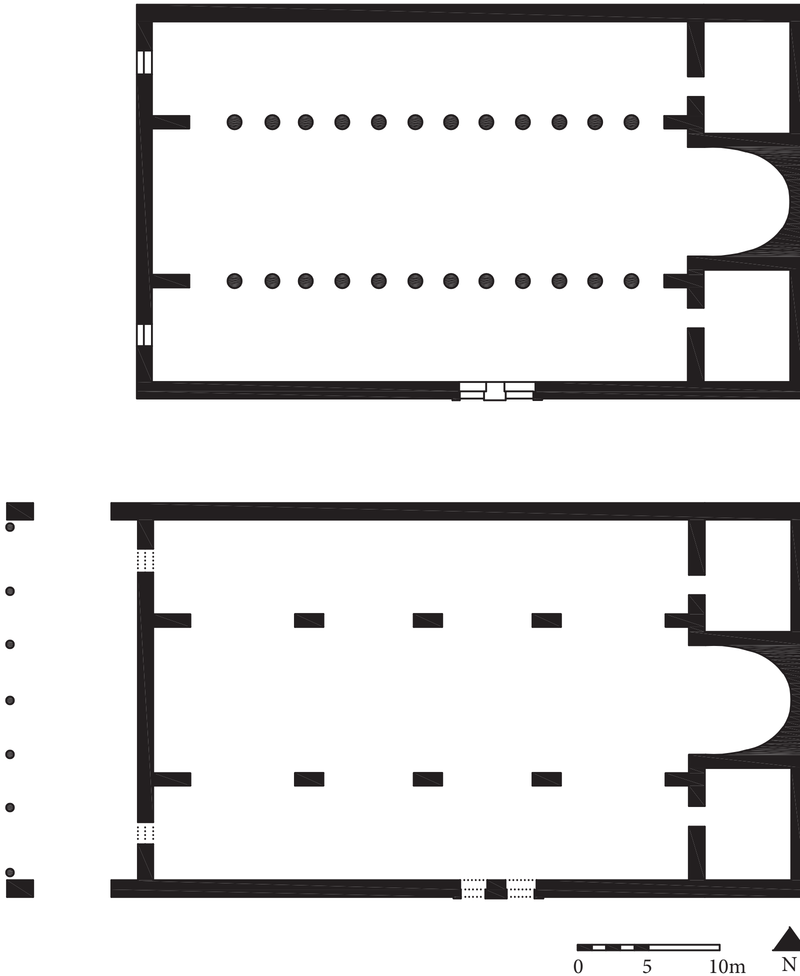

Fig. 2.6.2 Reconstructions of the basilica as a column and a pier basilica
Source: By the author after Bell.

the Martyropolis basilica (Fig. 2.6.2 for two reconstructions based on Bell's plan which features only the outer walls and the apse).[437] The main entrance to the church was on the south side, through a double access. This is a feature that we find in most Limestone Massif churches,[438] for dividing the men and

[437] The basilica in Dibsi Faraj is 38.50 metres x 23.75 metres, see R. P. Harper, 'Excavations at Dibsi Faraj, Northern Syria, 1972–1974: A Preliminary Note on the Site and its Monuments', *DOP* 29 (1975): 319–37, 333. The basilica in Brad (397–402) is 40.95 metres x 22.36 metres. G. Tchalenko and E. Baccache, *Églises de village de la Syrie du nord* (Paris: Geuthner, 1979), 8.

[438] J. P. Sodini, 'Archéologie des églises et organisation spatiale de la liturgie', in *Les liturgies syriaques*, ed. F. Cassingena-Trévedy and I. Jurasz (Paris: Geuthner, 2006), 229–66, 232.

women,[439] as was the case also in Ṭur ʿAbdin churches.[440] The doorways have horseshoe-shaped relieving arches similar to those in the baptistery of Nisibis. The doorways at the west end gave access to the side aisles. Judging from the piers at the western end and the doorways in the west wall, the basilica had three aisles. Bell suggested that a gabled roof covered the nave and that the aisles were covered with pitched roofs following the roof of the nave.[441]

According to Bell's plan, there were no rooms flanking the apse in the church, but rather a single central protruding apse, which was inscribed in a square. However, Mundell Mango pointed out that there are openings at the east end of the south aisle and in the south wall of the apse, and beam holes in the east façade that can be recognized in Bell's photographs. She notes that there should have been at least one *pastophorion* to the south of the apse.[442] The straight wall of the apse on the outside supports the idea of the existence of side rooms, since protruding apses are usually polygonal or circular. If there was a room on the south side, the existence of a northern one is likely, as the inscribed tripartite sanctuary was a standard arrangement, used in Northern Syria, Cilicia, and Egypt.[443] Although identified as *pastophoria*, the side rooms of the apse were not necessarily used as *prothesis* and *diakonikon*.[444] For Limestone Massif churches, it has been argued that they were used as a baptistery, and sacristy or *diakonikon*.[445] Given the dedication of the city to martyrs and the relics brought to the city, it is possible that in the cathedral of the Martyropolis, one of the side rooms held relics.

[439] W. Khoury, 'Churches in Syriac Space: Architectural and Liturgical Context and Development', in *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 476–554, 544.

[440] A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 135. In the Chaldean Church a similar use was seen; see Sodini, 'Organisation spatiale de la liturgie', fig. 1, and J. M. Fiey, *Mossoul chrétienne: essai sur l'histoire, l'archéologie et l'état actuel des monuments chrétiens de la ville de Mossoul* (Beyrouth: Impr. Catholique, 1959), pl. II. This is discussed further under the hall-type churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin in Section 3.2.2 and in Section 2.7.2.1, 'Around Constantia', where I discuss the recently excavated church at Gola near Göktaş.

[441] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 59.

[442] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 123, fn. 161.

[443] Bankusa and Ruwayha in Northern Syria are two fourth-century examples of the similar sanctuary arrangement which continued in the fifth-century churches, such as Sts. Paul and Moses at Dar Qita (418), the church at Marata, the extra-mural church at Dibsi Faraj (429) and the east church at Zebed; and in the sixth century North Syrian churches such as the Basilica A at Resafa, Qal'at Sim'an and Der Seta. and the west church of Umm al-Jimal in Jordan. In Cilicia, we find the enclosed tripartite sanctuary in Basilica I and Basilica III at Kanytelis (Kanlıdivane), the basilica at Canbazlı, the church at Ura, the south church at Öküzlü, and the Susanoğlu church (fourth century). For Syrian churches: Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord* and Tchalenko and Baccache, *Églises de village*. For Cilician churches, Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches*, figs. 46–8, 54, 38, 39.

[444] *Pastophoria* is a term referring to chambers that relate specifically to the Eucharistic liturgy. As Ousterhout explains, by the Middle Byzantine period, the liturgy changed and by then these rooms were used as *pastophoria* but before that they were used for various purposes. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 241. For the Church of Qalb Lozeh in Syria, as one of the side rooms does not communicate with the central, Ousterhout interpreted it as a reliquary chamber. See Mayer and Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 229 for some publications describing the multiple functions of these rooms.

[445] Khoury, 'Churches in Syriac Space', 544.

Fig. 2.6.3 Basilica, part of apse archivolt and south-eastern corner of the nave
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 176.

There have been two different suggestions about the dating of the church. The sculpture in the basilica (Fig. 2.6.3) was considered to be more delicately carved than the sixth-century examples in Amida, Dayr Metinan, and Dayr al-Zaʿfaran. On the other hand, the sculpture in the basilica was not considered as fine as the fourth-century sculpture at Nisibis. Based on this, it was argued that the basilica was probably erected in between. Thus, it has been suggested that it was built by Theodosius II in around 410–420 when the city was founded.[446] Brands, on the other hand, thinks the sculpture of the church is similar to the other sixth-century examples in Northern Mesopotamia, and argues that it was especially evident in the arch decoration near the basilica (Fig. 2.6.4). He also finds the proportions of some architectural features to each other in this basilica similar to those of the basilica at Basufan (491/6) and Basilica B at Resafa (518).

According to Brands, the latter church shows similarities with the basilica at Martyropolis in terms of the elevation typology (the distribution of the decoration) of the interior and sculpture. So, he seems inclined to date the Martyropolis

[446] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 124–5.

Fig. 2.6.4 Archway near basilica
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 178.

basilica to the early sixth century.[447] In this scenario, the basilica must have been built during the refortification of the walls. Given that we can only analyse this evidence from the photographs, it is difficult to ascertain the date. Apart from the finely carved architectural sculpture, the apse of the church must have also been adorned up to the cornice with marble slabs, and after that with a plastered surface, perhaps covered with mosaics, as one can see the rivet holes in the stones and the rough surface above them in Bell's pictures.[448]

The interior supports of this basilica, of which nothing has been recorded, could have been either piers or columns. Guyer and Bell must have visited the basilica in more or less the same years. Guyer tells us that it was a pier basilica.[449] However,

[447] Brands, *Die Bauornamentik von Resafa-Sergiupolis*, 257. The tetraconch, basilica B, and the gates and walls of Resafa have been dated to the final years of Anastasius's reign and it has been argued that they might have been finished by Justinian. See T. Ulbert, *Resafa 2: Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Mainz: Zabern, 1986) and T. Ulbert, *Forschungen in Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

[448] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 83 and pl. 45.

[449] S. Guyer, 'Surp Hagop (Djinndeirmene), einer Kloisterruine der Kommagene', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912): 498–508, 501. In the basilica at Martyropolis, the surviving springer and a few voussoirs of the first arch from the west of the south arcade in Bell's photographs are not informative enough to allow one to speculate upon the curve of the arch and the distance it spanned. However, the photograph showing the apse arch and the springing point of the first arch towards west lets us complete an arch and this arch roughly spans 5.5 to 6 metres and this makes it probable that the church was a widely arcaded basilica, as Guyer said. Some examples are at Cyrrhus, Qalb Lozeh, Behyo, Bamuqqa, Basmisli, Guwaniye, Umm al-Jimal, Anderin, Baalbek, Bettir, al-Fidre, Ruweiha, Brad, and

we do not know if he had seen the piers or what his source is for this piece of information. Bell, on the other hand, and later, Brands, thought it was a columnar basilica. Bell thought that the column capitals with classical decoration used in the Great Mosque of Silvan, which dates to the twelfth century, were spolia from the basilica.[450] However, this evidence alone is not sufficient to conclude that the church was a columnar basilica, since the capitals could be from any other ancient building in Martyropolis.

2.6.2 The Church of Yoldath Aloho

The Church of Yoldath Aloho, which stood in the south-western corner of the city, was drawn and photographed by Bell during her visit to the city in 1911.[451] During my visit to the city in 2005, I saw only a single capital reminiscent of the capitals that we can see in the photographs of Bell, used as a stop for the metal gate of a car park. This structure with peculiar plan (Fig. 2.6.5) is monumental (Fig. 2.6.6 and Fig. 2.6.7) and has distinct sculpture. Despite that, it has received little attention. Hans Buchwald discussed it while trying to contextualize the church in Sige.[452] He wrongly attributed it to the ninth century. Fiey, on the

Resafa (P. Grossmann, 'On the Spaciously Arcaded Basilica in Northern Syria', *Annales archeologiques arabes syriennes* 26 (1976): 137–44, 141–2) and also the east church in Zenobia. See J. Lauffray, *Halabiyya-Zenobia II* (Paris: Geuthner, 1991). The distance between the piers of these churches vary between 5 metres to 8 metres. The last three churches have cross-shaped piers, which differentiate them from the rest. All of the aforementioned examples are in or near Syria, which suggests that the type was local. The only western example of the type is the Church of St. Michele in Africisco at Ravenna, see P. Grossmann, *San Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna: baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1973). Grossman considered this type of plan as an innovation to make the interior of the churches more open. He thinks that the type originated in Northern Syria as a result of the 'provincial peculiarities of the liturgy used in this region' which involved a Syrian or U-shaped *bema*. Grossmann, 'On the Spaciously Arcaded Basilica', 139. However, the U-shaped *bema* is not confined to the widely arcaded basilicas, nor do all the widely arcaded basilicas have a U-shaped *bema*. See the discussion on the bema of the church in Gola near Göktaş in Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia'. Given the shape of its apse, its overall dimensions, the dimension of its piers engaged to the west wall and its overall proportions, amongst the pier basilicas, the basilica at Cyrrhus seems to be the closest parallel to the Martyropolis basilica. It is also not far from it geographically. The basilica which is geographically closest to Martyropolis and which has been excavated is the extramural basilica at Dibsi Faraj on the Euphrates, a martyrium dated to 429. Although the latter has square piers, they are not monumental and the distance between them is small, as is the case in columnar basilicas. In Northern Mesopotamia, there is only one pier basilica that has survived. It is the Church of Yoldath Aloho in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, where the piers are not placed as widely as the above-mentioned piers (less than 5 metres). It is very difficult to determine the date of this church, which has gone through considerable rebuilding. Another example in the region may be the basilica at Kafrhan which is close to Norhut near Edessa. Guyer published a photograph of the church without a description. Guyer, 'Reisen in Mesopotamien im Sommer 1910/11', 292–301, 300.

[450] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 125. For more on the mosque, see E. Keser-Kayaalp and L. Wheatley-Irving, 'Late Antique Architectural Sculpture at the Mayyāfāriqīn Mosque'.

[451] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 61–5.

[452] H. Buchwald, *The Church of the Archangels in Sige near Mudania* (Wien: H. Boehlaus Nachf, 1969).

other hand, proposed a date of 752 and suggested that this church was the 'magnificent church' built by the bishop of Martyropolis, Athanasius Sandalaya, who later became patriarch.[453] The city was lost to the Arabs in 640. After the Arab conquest, Christians may have restored their churches in the cities, but it is impossible that a church on that scale was built in the eighth century under Arab rule, given that even within the Byzantine Empire, there were hardly any churches being built on such a monumental scale at that time.

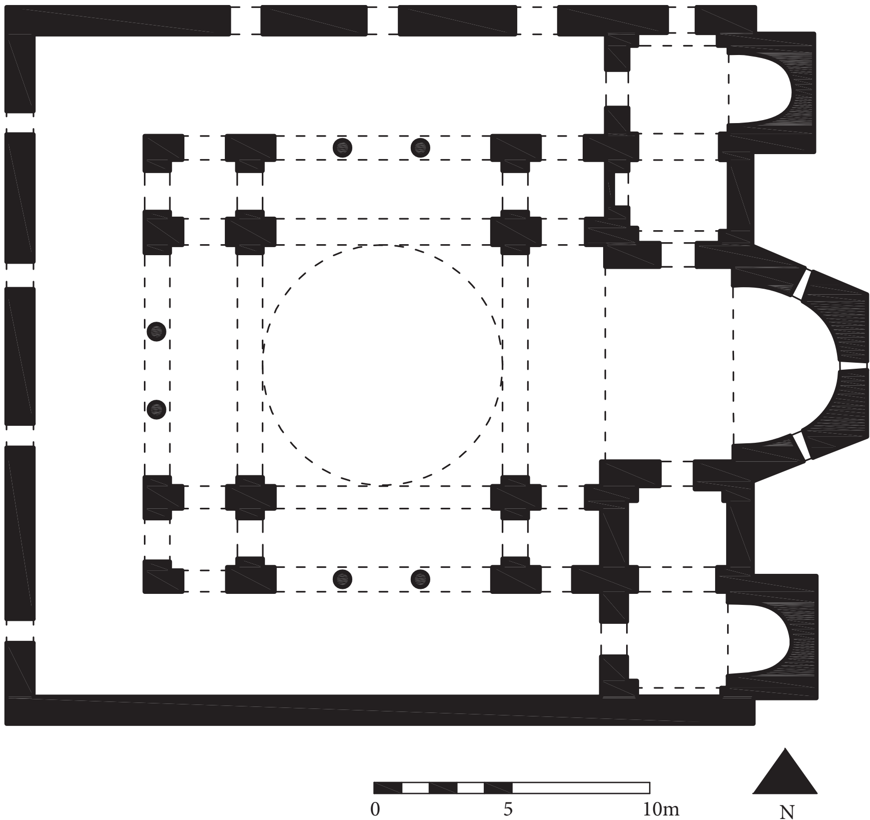

Fig. 2.6.5 Plan of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Martyropolis
Source: Redrawn by S. Kayasü after Bell.

Krautheimer introduced the Church of Yoldath Aloho (the Virgin) at Martyropolis and Cumanin Cami at Antalya as late sixth-century examples of the cross-domed type. According to him, these churches were not vaulted, unlike later examples of the type, but had a timber pyramidal roof. To explain the relation of these churches to the later vaulted churches of the type, Krautheimer suggested two alternatives. Either these churches were provincial forerunners of the type, or

[453] Fiey, 'Martyropolis syriaque', 24.

there was a vaulted and domed prototype at Constantinople, which is lost to us.[454] Ousterhout sees it as an example of a type before the cross-domed church of which we have several examples.[455] He notes that it was planned 'originally with cruciform naves and corner compartments—that is, with bilateral symmetry along the major axes, something that is absent in the early domed basilicas'.[456]

The central space was square in plan and there were four piers in the corners of the square, with arcades of three arches between them (Fig. 2.6.8). The narthex and aisles formed a U shape. Judging from the corbels on the walls that can be recognized in the pictures, the church had a gallery. Each of the four supports of the dome, which in some other cross-domed and ambulatory churches are massive solid piers, are here voided into an arrangement of four slender piers on a square plan, meeting in arches that, I would suggest, supported a little stone dome or vault. Bell tentatively suggested that the missing supports at the inner corners of the piers were cruciform to match the piers, and interpreted this design as an insertion of additional piers made because of a lack of knowledge of the necessary building technology. According to her, the architect did not know how to transfer the load to the outer walls; therefore he was obliged to double his piers to have strong supports to carry the dome.[457] In fact, they can be evaluated as an elegant solution to break the massiveness of the piers by dividing them into four (Fig. 2.6.9). It must also have something to do with the tradition of building with ashlar. Instead of big piers made of rubble faced with ashlar blocks, as was the general practice elsewhere, the builders may have found an economic and elegant way of having a large cross-section using ashlar blocks alone.[458] Such an

[454] Cross-domed churches have received a full discussion in Krautheimer's book (Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 285–300). He included the church at Dereağzı (early ninth century), the Church of St. Clement at Ankara (suggestions varying between the sixth to eighth centuries), the Church of St. Nicholas at Myra, the Church of Archangels at Sige, the Dormition church at Nicea (around 700), St. Sophia at Thessaloniki (once dated between 780 and 787, it is now dated between the end of the sixth century and 620–630). K. Theocharidou, *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki: From its Erection up to the Turkish Conquest* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1988), 157; Kalenderhane Cami (twelfth century), and Gül Cami (twelfth century) at Constantinople within this group (although the dating of them vary).

[455] Some examples are the second Church of the Theotokos in Ephesus, Atik Mustafa Paşa Cami at Constantinople, the church in Amasra, Alakilise, the church of the Monastery of St. Constantine on Lake Apolyont, the cathedral of Herakleia, and St. Sophia at Vize (R. Ousterhout, 'The Architecture of Iconoclasm', in *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (c.680–850)*, ed. L. Brubaker and J. Haldon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 3–45. Another example is in Enez, a church called Kral Kilisesi. A twelfth-century date was suggested for this church based on the coin finds. However, Ousterhout and Bakirtzis argue that the construction technique of the church is in favour of an earlier date. They especially emphasize the similarity of the wall-building technique with that of the Church of St. Sophia at Thessaloniki. R. G. Ousterhout and C. Bakirtzis, *The Byzantine Monuments of the Evros/Meric River Valley* (Thessaloniki: European Center for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, 2008), 43. Mren cathedral, which is in Armenia, can also be considered as a later example of the type, a cross-domed basilica (completed before 640). See C. Maranci, 'Building Churches in Armenia: Art at the Borders of Empire and the Edge of the Canon', *The Art Bulletin* 88/4 (2006): 656–75.

[456] Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 192.

[457] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 62.

[458] The Church of Yoldath Aloho and the Church of St. Sophia at Thessaloniki are similar in terms of their pier articulation.

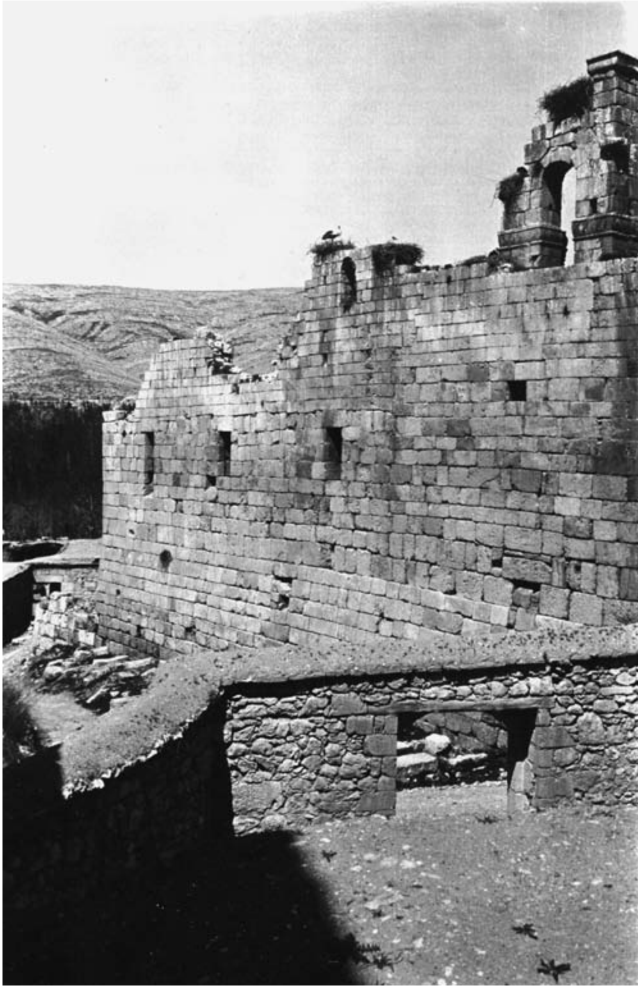

Fig. 2.6.6 Western façade of the Church of Yoldath Aloho
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 180.

articulation of the piers created a considerably wide transitional area between the domed space and lateral aisles. With this arrangement, it was necessary for small intermediate rooms, which were rather awkward, to be introduced between the central sanctuary and the side rooms.[459]

An important structure that I think is missed in the discussions on this monument is the al-Mundhir building in Resafa. It was built sometime between

[459] With the Kral Kilisesi at Enez, the Church of Yoldath Aloho shares a similar apse arrangement where there are rectangular rooms between the protruding apses in the sanctuary.

Fig. 2.6.7 Southern façade of the Church of Yoldath Aloho
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 181.

569 and 581 by the Ghassanid king al-Mundhir and was interpreted as a secular audience hall. Recent scholarship, however, has returned to the first identification as church. Key Fowden emphasizes that in the cultural context of Resafa, the al-Mundhir building might have had both secular and sacred functions.[460] It has a cross-in square plan. Efthymios Rizos, in his review of recent publication on

[460] Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 167.

Fig. 2.6.8 Interior of the Church of Yoldath Aloho, looking west
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 195.

Fig. 2.6.9 Capitals of north-east piers of the Church of Yoldath Aloho
Source: Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, S 198.

Resafa, suggested a Mesopotamian link with this church through the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ,[461] which is in fact a seventh-century building. Given the development of the cult of relics, which ran parallel in Resafa and Martyropolis, and given also the similarity of the basilicas in these two cities, it is even more tempting to argue for a parallel between the building of al-Mundhir and the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Martyropolis.

Although the plans of these two buildings show similarities, their sculpture is different. Nevertheless, confirming relations with Mesopotamia, uncut acanthus leaves, which are common in Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia, are used in al-Mundhir. The sculpture in the Church of Yoldath Aloho, on the other hand, has some familiar but also some unusual features. Thus, it would be highly misleading to approach this building by considering only its plan. The basket capitals on the columns separating the square nave and lateral aisles can be related to capitals in the churches at Dvin and Zuartʿnocʿ in Armenia, both dating to the seventh century.[462] However, the basket capitals were not limited to Armenia. They are found in the wider Byzantine Empire from early on, such as at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and in Apamea.[463] In Northern Mesopotamia itself, we can count especially those in Dara, one capital at Nisibis, various capitals in the Mardin Museum, and two capitals in the Church of Mor Yaʿqub in Midon in Ṭur ʿAbdin. A similar basket weave can also be found in the hanging baskets in the sculpture of the Mor Ḥananyo church at Dayr al-Zaʿfaran.

The egg-and-leaf motif in the lower register of the engaged capital on the west pier of the church and the vine scroll on the base of the capital of the north-east pier are regular in sixth-century Northern Mesopotamian sculpture. Other features of the sculpture are comparatively rare and display an external artistic encounter. A close parallel for the upper arrangement with double-grooved grid enclosing rosettes with twelve petals can be found on a capital from Saray, close to Edessa.[464] The reused column shafts in the Great Mosque at Amida, which can be dated to the sixth century, are also similar to those of the piers of the Church of Yoldath Aloho, in terms of the repetition of the same motif over the entire surface of the column. As has been mentioned also in the Section 2.4.1 on the Great Mosque in Amida, the treatment of filling a surface with a repetition of a pattern is reminiscent of Sasanian decoration.[465]

The engaged pier to the north of the apse and the sculpture of the upper level of the north-western pier had interlaced roundels filled alternately with a whorl and

[461] E. Rizos, 'Review of Forschungen in Resafa-Sergiupolis, ed. T. Ulbert (Resafa 7)', *Plekos* 22 (2020): 67–74.

[462] Maranci, 'Byzantium through Armenian Eyes', 105–24.

[463] For the basket capitals in Holy Sepulchre: R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, plate 47; and for those in Apamea, see C. Strube, *Baudekoration im nordsyrischen Kalksteinmassiv* (Mainz: Zabern, 1993) vol. II, plate 11c.

[464] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 86.

[465] See Kleiss, 'Die Sasanidischen Kapitelle', 143–7; and Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, 88.

a blossom (Fig. 2.6.9).[466] There is no doubt that the sculpture on this pier is different from the classical sculptural tradition in Northern Mesopotamia. In fact, the sculpture is reminiscent of many other tenth- or eleventh-century Byzantine examples,[467] although the one in Martyropolis is more deeply carved and more sophisticated, with its background also carved with motifs. Sculpture with interlacing roundels is not a frequent motif in sixth-century Northern Mesopotamia, but it strongly recalls a stucco sculpture on a door jamb in an eighth-century building at Hira.[468] Both of the above-mentioned piers have a band of guilloche. The guilloche is a very rare figure in the architectural sculpture of Northern Mesopotamia, but plaiting, which can be considered as an elaborated form of guilloche, is relatively popular.[469]

On the other side of the north pier, which has the whorls and blossoms, there is a vase with undulating vines bearing leaves and bunches of grapes coming out of it. The vase in the Church of Yoldath Aloho is similar in terms of style to the vase in the exterior niche of the sixth-century church at Dayr al-Zaʿfaran with the vines coming out of it. In the same church, there is a vase in the sculpture of the frieze. The style of these vases, with their fluted bodies and the curves of their handles, is similar to the vase in Martyropolis, but the latter is slightly more crudely done. The lozenge-shaped entrelac of the capitals has been likened to the capitals in Coptic grave stele dated to sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries.[470] The sculpture on the north-eastern pier is a smaller-scale version of that of the other piers. It recalls Sasanian examples, such as the sculpture from Dāmgān, Iran.[471]

Although the sculpture of the church may appear to be of a medieval date at first glance, and led some scholars to date the structure accordingly, the sculpture has parallels also with sixth- to eighth-century examples, which one can find in Northern Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Sasanian Persia. The Sasanian connection is remarkable when one considers the history of the city. We have mentioned that in 589, the city fell to the Persians. Two years later, it was returned to the Byzantines out of gratitude for the Emperor Maurice's support of Khusrow II against Bahram, which had resulted in Khusrow's regaining of the throne. A long inscription on the city walls, set up on Khusrow's instruction, commemorated the restoration of the city to Roman control. Michael the Syrian wrote in the twelfth century that Khusrow built three churches in Martyropolis, but he does not mention their locations.[472] Given the long Greek inscription he commissioned,

[466] For more images, see S 182–97 in Gertrude Bell archive, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/.

[467] That is mainly why Buchwald dated the church wrongly to the ninth century. Buchwald, *The Church of the Archangels in Sige.*

[468] D. Talbot-Rice, 'The Oxford Excavations at Hira, 1931', *Antiquity* 6/23 (1932): 276–91, pl. 6.

[469] Also in slightly later examples, such as the seventh- or eighth-century Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ.

[470] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 83.

[471] Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, 88.

[472] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 10, ch. 13.

it might be possible that he contributed to the building of a church but it is perhaps unlikely that he was the sole patron, as he was in a weak position. Some scholars, including Bell, found it tempting to associate the Church of Yoldath Aloho with the churches built by Khusrow. Bell thought that the remains would not conflict with such a date. However, when one thinks of the imperial projects in the wider Mesopotamia, it is more convincing to argue, as Mundell Mango did, that the church was built by the Byzantine emperors, either in 536 when Martyropolis became the capital of the province of Armenia IV, or in 591 when it was gained back.[473] The latter dating would also favour our link with the al-Mundhir building, which was built when al-Mundhir held office between 570 and 581. In details such as the construction techniques and sculpture, the church exhibited the influence of its surroundings; namely, other Northern Mesopotamian, Armenian, and Sasanian structures. The Church of Yoldath Aloho at Martyropolis contributes to our knowledge of a less-known and transitional period of Byzantine architecture, and illustrates artistic encounters in the eastern border of the Empire before the Arab conquest.

2.7 Constantia

Constantia (known as Tella de Mauzelat in Syriac, and today as Viranşehir, a town in the province of Şanlıurfa) was the headquarters of the dux of Mesopotamia in 363–527 and 532–540. It was an important military centre strategically located between Edessa and Dara. The name of the city changed over the centuries with the names of the emperors, shifting to Nicephorium, Antoninopolis, Maximianopolis, and finally Constantia. This illustrates the imperial attention that it received.[474]

No plan of the Late Antique city had been drawn. I have suggested a schematic and hypothetical plan of the walls of the city based on the following evidence (Fig. 2.7.1).[475] Consul J. G. Taylor gave the dimension of each side of the city as half a mile.[476] In addition, a modern pamphlet produced by the municipality of Viranşehir tells us that there were twenty-four towers of which only a few survive. There are some partly surviving circular towers around the city that were made of limestone and basalt, as was recorded by Procopius.[477]

[473] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 127.

[474] E. Rizos, 'New Cities and New Urban Ideals, AD 250–350', in *New Cities in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Rizos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 23.

[475] Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Church of Virgin at Amida'. Some parts of this section are reworked from this article.

[476] Taylor, 'Journal of a Tour', 354.

[477] Procopius describes the walls of Constantia as: 'the lower courses for a short space being built of hard stone suitable for making mill-stones (*lithosmylites*), but the upper portion consisting of so-called "white stone" (*leukolithos*), which is untrustworthy and very soft' (Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.5.2–3).

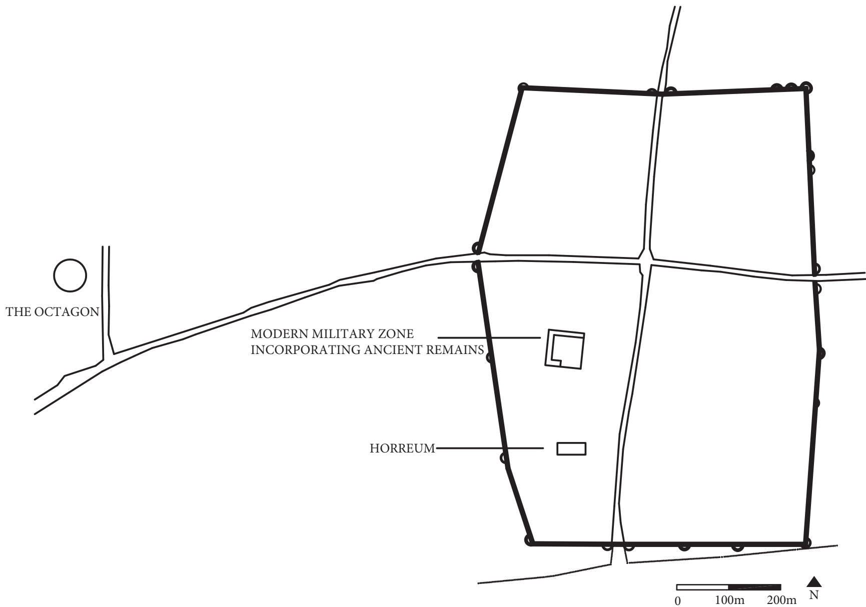

Fig. 2.7.1 Layout of Constantia
Source: By the author after the modern city plans and brochures of the municipality.

Apart from the walls, the modern town has few remains left of its Late Antique past, and these are mostly concealed in the gardens of private houses. In the past, a tetrapylon was recorded.[478] Numerous Greek and Syriac inscriptions from the city have been studied.[479] None of the churches in the city have survived. The churches that we know by name through inscriptions and some later texts are the Church of Mor Cosmas and Mor Damian,[480] a church dedicated to the protomartyr,

[478] Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien*, 403. Mango suggested that Bell's two photographs might show parts of this tetrapylon (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 155). In their descriptions, Humann and Puchstein claim that the columns had Corinthian capitals. A capital in a private garden in Constantia is in line with both their description and Mundell Mango's identification of the engaged piers as parts of the tetrapylon. This Corinthian capital carved into the basalt has a cross-section similar to the engaged piers and is flat at the back. It is deeply carved and classical in character. There are many other basalt capitals, usually with uncut acanthus leaves, in the city scattered in the gardens. See Fig. 2.7.5.

[479] Oppenheim and Lukas, 'Griechische und Lateinische Inschriften', 60, nos. 92–6. A Syriac inscription on a basalt sarcophagus has also been recorded, see Moritz, 'Syrische Inschriften', 171, no. 8. A Greek inscription records the construction of a horreum in 543. Mundell Mango published the photograph of the structure to which the inscription was attached (M. Mundell Mango, 'The Commercial Map of Constantinople', *DOP* 54 (2000): 189–207, fig. 9). The inscription was found on a structure of which only two rows of stone have survived. Today nothing can be seen above the ground. However, I think, those rows of stones belonged to a subterranean structure that I saw in the city in 2005. The structure has transverse arches on which rest large stone slabs, forming a flat slab. On top of that probably stood another structure.

[480] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 11, ch. 26.

probably St. Stephen,[481] and the Church of Mor Yuḥannon.[482] Nowadays, the only remnants of a church are the remains just 1 kilometre west of the city walls. They consist of scattered architectural fragments and a standing pier, belonging to a monumental church recorded in the past as the 'Octagon'.[483]

2.7.1 The Octagon

The surviving single pier of the Octagon and some scattered architectural fragments around it testify to the monumentality of the building. Otto Puchstein described the building as having a central room enclosing eight piers supporting a dome. It had a long apsed choir on the east. There were square rooms protruding on the north and south. In the west there was an entrance chamber, which was slightly more elongated, with a dimension of 11 metres. There was a staircase that led up to a gallery and down to a crypt attached to this room. On the east, there was a deep rectangular room (22 metres long) terminating in an apse. This eastern room was tripartite on its long side. Including the protruding structures, the church was 67.5 metres in length and 50 metres in width (Fig. 2.7.2).[484] Bell visited the site in 1911 and saw six piers of the church standing. Her photographs show extensive rubble around the piers. In Max von Oppenheim's photo, which is reproduced here, we see five piers (Fig. 2.7.3). In the late 1970s, Mundell Mango updated the account on the Octagon when there were two piers of the church left, and proposed some alternatives for its dedication.[485]

From Oppenheim's photograph and the remaining pier, one can recognize the springing of an arch, which points to the existence of a vault at the gallery level. Strzygowski, who had never been to the site, uses Puchstein's accounts and plan, and suggests that the church had a barrel-vaulted ambulatory and that above this was a barrel-vaulted gallery. Strzygowski described the building as oval-shaped, with an east–west diameter of 32 metres and a north–south diameter of 34.5 metres.[486] Puchstein drew the church as an oval but actually described it as a circle. According to Mark Johnson, who recently analysed octagonal churches, the building could not have been an oval, as churches of this form began to be built only later. He thinks Puchstein's dimensions may not be accurate. Johnson argues that the inner diameter of the exterior wall was 32 metres (100 Byzantine feet), and that the opening leading from the octagon to the sanctuary was 4.8 metres

[481] Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien*, inscr. no. 4; Dolabani et al., 'Catalogue des manuscrits', 604.

[482] Based on Mundell Mango's suggestion. Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 157.

[483] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 157.

[484] Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien*, 406.

[485] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 155.

[486] J. Strzygowski, *Kleinasien, ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), 97–101.

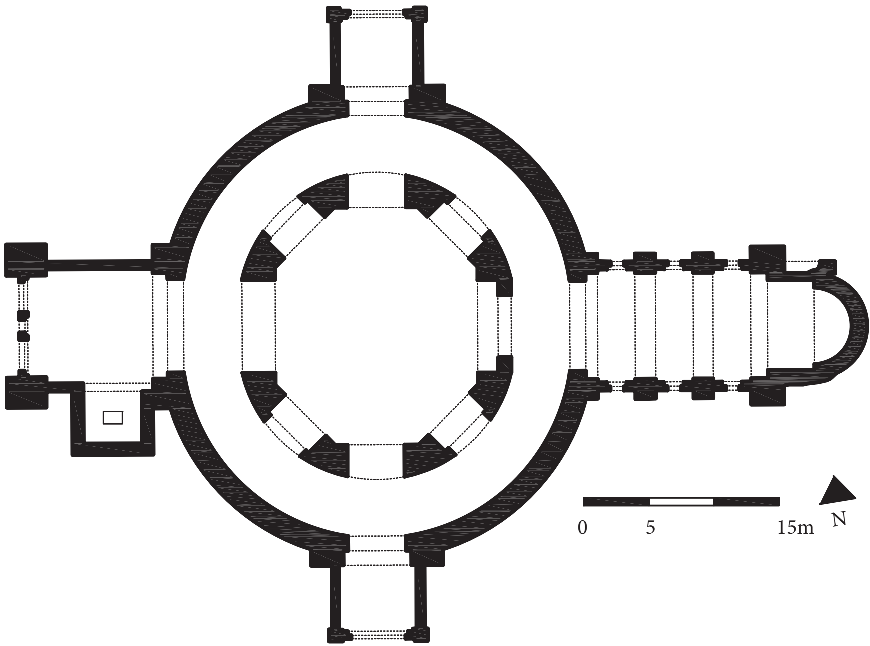

Fig. 2.7.2 Plan of the Octagon
Source: Redrawn by S. Kayasü after Puchstein.

Fig. 2.7.3 Five piers of the Octagon
Source: ©Max von Oppenheim Stiftung, 29/15.4 S.4b.

(15 Byzantine feet). He thinks that the use of the Byzantine foot in the church is evidence for its sixth-century date.[487]

The standing monumental pier (Fig. 2.7.4) is wedge-shaped and wider on the side of the ambulatory. It is built of rubble masonry, faced with basalt blocks with rows of bricks in between. The courses of brick in the piers can also be identified from Bell's photographs. Strzygowski notes five windows in the outer circular wall, with the middle window (1.78 metres wide) wider than the rest. The main entrance was marked with massive piers, probably to strengthen the visual connection with the massive structure. A simple diagonal cyma under the springing of the arches and a cornice piece on the outside, as well as a few dark brown-coloured marble remains of engaged columns and other columns, were also mentioned in Strzygowski's account of the church.[488]

Fig. 2.7.4 Surviving pier of the Octagon

[487] M. J. Johnson, *San Vitale in Ravenna and Octagonal Churches in Late Antiquity* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2018), 126.

[488] Strzygowski, *Kleinasien*, 97–101.

In Constantia, there are scattered Late Antique remains, including window mullions that are not far from the site of the church (Fig. 2.7.5). The scattered mullions, which are pinkish in colour, are similar to those used as chancel barriers in the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Amida (Fig. 2.4.7). They are similar also to other sixth-century mullions found at Antioch.[489] Some of these mullions may have belonged to the church, since, amongst the remains on the site of the church, fragments cut from a similar pink stone are found. On the site of the church, there are fragments decorated with uncut acanthus leaves. Although this type of sculpture is not distinctive enough to help with the dating, we should note that in the sixth century, uncut acanthus leaves seem to have been common in the sculpture of the region.[490]

Earlier scholarship, which related certain plan types with certain functions, is now challenged. Regardless, it is still valid to say that most martyria—although not all—were octagonal in plan. Johnson lists thirty-four examples from Late Antiquity.[491] Most of the octagonal churches marked a holy site, a martyr's place of execution or burial, or the location of some particular event connected with Christ, Mary, or one of the apostles. The distinctions between memorial and the liturgical churches began to blur as early as the end of Constantine's reign, when the transportation of relics began.[492]

Johnson analyses the Octagon in Constantia together with other Justinianic churches, namely the Octagonal church at Thessaloniki, SS. Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople, St. Michael at Anaplus (Arnavutköy), and St. John the Baptist in Hebdomon. The last three, along with San Vitale in Ravenna, are considered to be similarly sized domed churches with large piers, ambulatories, and galleries.[493] They all have a chancel before the apse, which suggests that they were used also for regular liturgical services. Johnson regarded the Octagon in Constantia as part of the evolution of the centralized churches in the early part of Justinian's reign.

As for the dedication of the Octagon, three tentative suggestions have been made in the past. One of them was John (Yuḥannon) of Tella (d. 537).[494] He is acknowledged as one of the leading figures in the formation of the Syrian Orthodox Church during the time of the persecutions resulting from the anti-

[489] R. Stillwell, *Antioch on-the-Orontes III. The Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), pl. 39.

[490] Capitals with uncut acanthus leaves can be found also in Edessa, Dara, and in Mardin Museum. For more on those, see Section 4.1.3, 'Epilogue'.

[491] Johnson, *San Vitale in Ravenna*. Given the neglect of the church in the past, in A. Grabar, *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'artchrétien antique* (Paris: Collège de France, 1943–46); and in Smith, *The Dome*, Johnson's inclusion of the church in his discussion is noteworthy.

[492] The section entitled 'Martyrium or Church?' in Mayer and Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 167–74, discusses the topic for the churches in Antioch.

[493] Johnson, *San Vitale in Ravenna*.

[494] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 157.

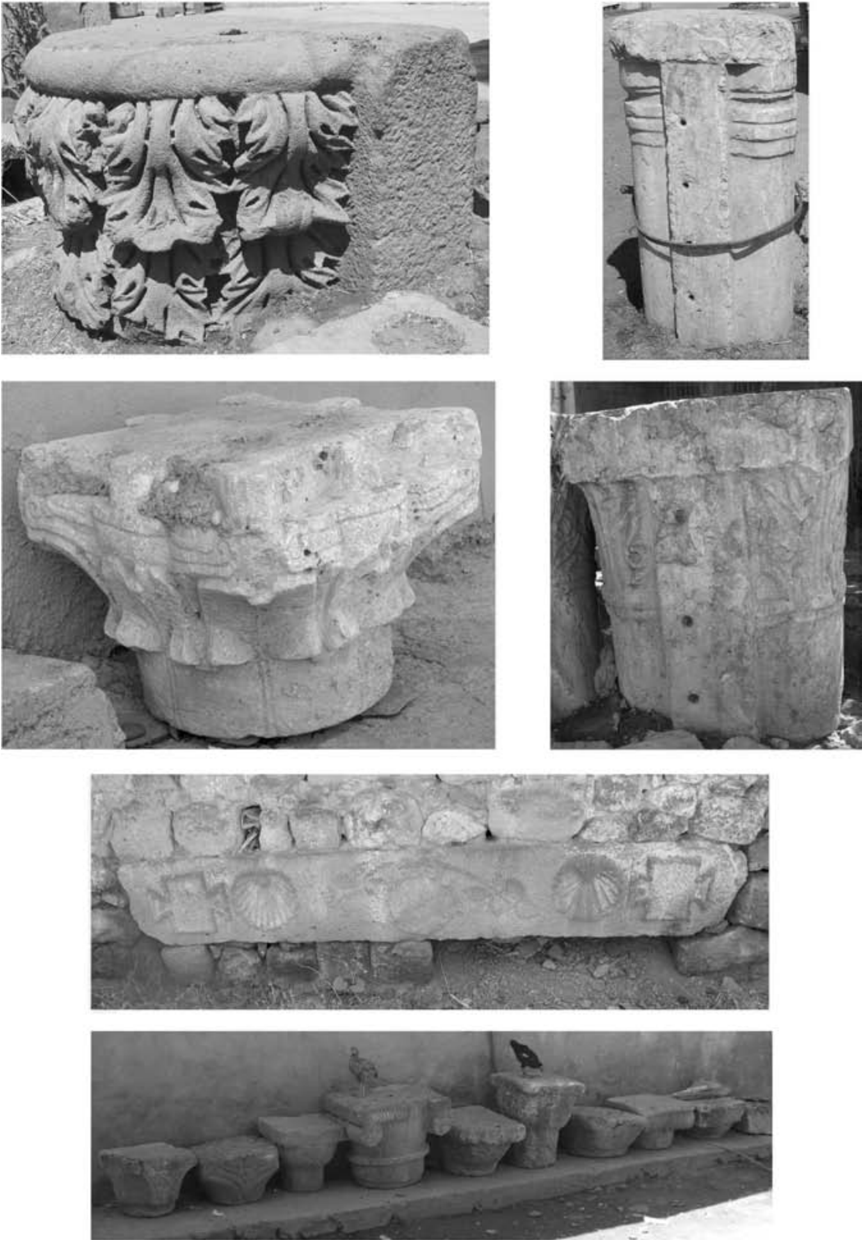

Fig. 2.7.5 Architectural fragments in the private gardens of Constantia

Chalcedonian position of this church. As the bishop of Tella, he lived most of his time in exile in the mountains of Mardin and died in Antioch.[495] His *Life* does not mention that his relics were brought back to Tella. In an entry in the catalogue of manuscripts at Homs, we are told that in February 1214, the sultan destroyed in Amida the cathedral, the Church of the Forty Martyrs, and the Church of Mor Cosmas, as well as the Church of Mor Yuḥannon of Tella not long before them.[496] The church mentioned here as the Church of Mor Yuḥannon seems to be a significant church that was worthy of mention amongst those the sultan destroyed. As we see, there was a church dedicated to Mor Yuḥannon of Tella in Amida and it is possible that there was one named after him also in his hometown.

The second suggestion for its dedication was Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), who played an important role in the survival of the Syrian Orthodox church.[497] The relics of Baradaeus were brought to his monastery, that of Phesiltha in Tella, where he had already built a temple.[498] Mundell Mango tentatively suggested that the Octagon was the Phesiltha monastery, rebuilt in 622 when Baradaeus's relics were brought back to Tella. This suggestion is based on the similarity that she notes between the Octagon and the church that Narses III built at Vaghapshapat (the Zuart'noc' church) sometime between 640 and 661. The dimensions of their diameters, 32 metres in the Octagon and 38.7 metres in Zuart'noc', are comparable. Besides, the walls of both have a rubble core faced with basalt ashlar. The existence of an upper storey, the monumentality of the piers, and the existence of a crypt are other important features that they share. In both structures the outer wall has a circular plan. So the argument was the following: the Octagon was probably built in the early seventh century, and since the relics of an important figure were brought back to the city in that period, it must have been dedicated to him.

However, the differences between these two monuments are also as significant. Starting from the basics, their layouts differ. The inner core is a tetraconch at Zuart'noc' and an octagon in Constantia. The surviving columns of Zuart'noc' are

[495] V. Menze, 'Yuhannon of Tella', in *Gorgias Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. P. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 447.

[496] Dolabani et al., 'Catalogue des manuscrits', 604.

[497] See Section 1.2, 'Introduction'.

[498] The Phesiltha monastery was also called the holy convent of strlytys (John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 19, 576), where the saint's parents had made a vow after remaining childless. Brooks reads the word as stratelates and supposes that it refers to St. Michael, but adds that his usual title is archistrategos. Mundell Mango, however, has suggested that the name refers to Theodore Stratelates, a fourth-century martyr, and military saint. She thinks that it would have been appropriate to commemorate a noted military saint in the city, which, from 381 onwards, was the seat of the Dux of Mesopotamia (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 156). However, John Haldon showed that we do not find a mention of Theodore Stratelates before the ninth century (J. Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints. The Martyrdoms and Miracles of Saints Theodore 'the Recruit' and 'the General'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). Since we are dealing with a border region with important military presence, stratelates might in fact refer to a patron but not a saint.

significantly shorter than the monumental piers of the Octagon. The most significant feature of the Octagon, namely the elongated apse, is absent in the church of Zuart'noc'. The date, 622, falls in the period when the region was under the Sasanian rule until Heraclius's reconquest. Thus, it has been hypothesized that Khusrow II was the patron; he is associated with Constantia because he waited in that city to regain his throne with the help of Maurice, and he is known to have promoted the Syrian Orthodox.[499]

The Octagon is in fact more similar to the aisled-tetraconch church (the Church of Yoldath Aloho) at Amida. They share a central plan, a double-shell arrangement and a notable long east room. The use of basalt alternating with brick in the walls, the use of limestone for architectural elements in the interior, and a monumental quality are also common to both. The aisled-tetraconch churches were studied in the past as a group and were identified as the cathedrals of their respective cities, but these views are changing with new discoveries. In addition, it was suggested that they were Chalcedonian foundations. This argument was recently revisited in a new contextualization of the Zuart'noc' church. Christina Maranci has argued that Narses was deliberately employing an architectural form that had Chalcedonian associations, 'a form that has relation with powerful Greek-speaking neighbours'.[500]

Having such a martyrium built for an exiled bishop, John of Tella, does not seem plausible. The second suggestion, though, implies, although not explicitly, that the Syrian Orthodox would not have been able to build such a structure without the help of imperial involvement, and thus assumes a Sasanian connection. Moreover, the Phesiltha monastery existed before Jacob; he is recorded to have built a church in it in his lifetime, and later his relics were deposited in it. Jacob's nickname was 'burdoyo' meaning '(dressed in) saddle cloth' to travel in disguise,[501] a description that clashes with the notion of him building in a location so close to the city walls. His monastery was probably a secluded one.

Agreeing with Johnson on the dating of the church to the reign of Justinian, I would like to suggest an alternative dedication, namely to the saints Mor Cosmas and Mor Damian. Michael the Syrian records a Church of Mor Cosmas and Mor Damian in Constantia where the monks of Mesopotamia gathered in 751.[502] Wendy Mayer has argued that local churches dedicated to the Virgin (Yoldath Aloho), the archangel Michael, and saints Cosmas and Damian were promoted by Justinian precisely for their ability 'to generate goodwill across the theological divide'. She notes that the cult of Cosmas and Damian was 'popular and

[499] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 157.
[500] Maranci, 'Byzantium through Armenian Eyes'.
[501] Brock, 'Ya'qub Burd'oyo', 431.
[502] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 11, ch. 23, 516.

theologically multivalent'.[503] Phil Booth also argues that healing shrines were frequented by Christians of various doctrinal inclinations.[504]

Although Procopius writes that Justinian built only one church dedicated to saints Cosmas and Damian outside Constantinople, and that is in Antioch, Mayer argues that it was not the case.[505] There is one in Gerasa, clearly identified through an inscription.[506] Thus, it is tempting to think that if there was a church dedicated to saints Cosmas and Damian in Constantia, as recorded by Michael the Syrian, it was probably built by Justinian. Procopius records that Justinian raised the height of the circuit wall of Constantia and made it stronger by inserting new towers and changing the material in some places. He also diverted the stream that ran outside the city and built fountains inside it.[507] Procopius does not mention that Justinian built a church but he might well have done so, as Procopius does not record all of Justinian's building activities.

The utilization of the dedication of such a monumental church to address the theological divide would fit the controversies in the region. Booth thinks that these saints absorb a multiplicity of doctrinal meanings, and that they project an ideology within which multiplicity is acknowledged and preserved. In addition, as these saints are from Syria, they help present a deliberate doctrinal ambiguity.[508] An anecdote in the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, although written in the twelfth century, may show that Justinian's efforts found an echo in the Syriac community. Michael writes: 'In the period when the emperor Justinian died, a pious man had a vision of a fiery furnace being set in the middle of a plain. When the man asked what it was for, he was told that it had been kindled for the emperor Justinian to be thrown into because he introduced corruption into the church. However, the emperor was forgiven because he was merciful to the poor and because he built many churches.'[509]

After the earthquake of 528, Justinian renamed Antioch 'Theopolis'. The bishop of the city at that time, Ephrem, who was Chalcedonian, rebuilt the great church, which was destroyed in the earthquake. This was a symbolic act, reconstituting the metropolitan city of the Chalcedonian Christians of Syria. According to Andrade, Ephrem's building projects were physical manifestations of his identity and authority. John of Tella was called 'church builder' in the sense that

[503] W. Mayer, 'Antioch and the Intersection between Religious Factionalism, Place and Power', in *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, ed. N. Lenski and A. Cain (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 357–67.

[504] P. Booth, 'Orthodox and Heretic in the Early Byzantine Cult(s) of Saints Cosmas and Damian', in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. P. Sarris, M. Dal Santo, and P. Booth (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 117.

[505] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 1.3. 14–17, 1.8.2. 17–19.

[506] Mayer, 'Antioch and the Intersection', 365.

[507] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.5.

[508] Booth, 'Orthodox and Heretic', 124, 126.

[509] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 9, ch. 34.

he had 'built' a church of people in a frontier territory. According to the Life of John, Ephrem abducted John and brought him to Antioch and to the church he built. Ephrem humiliated John, usurping his status as a 'church builder'.[510] In search of the architectural origins of the Octagon in Constantia, the Golden Octagon at Antioch, founded by Constantine the Great in 327 and finished by his son Constantine II in 341, can be considered as a possible prototype, just as it may have been a prototype of aisled-tetraconch churches.[511] Thus, building such a monumental church with references to Antioch in the hometown of John, who had created his anti-Chalcedonian *politeia* by the frontier, can be considered a strong statement of the Chalcedonian position, given also that the notion of 'church building' in a material sense was given great importance.

In the nearby village of Oğlakçı, a local man gathered ancient architectural fragments in his garden over the last twenty years. The fragments include a moulded door lintel, column capitals, and a block with a Greek inscription, which may well have been from the Octagon as they are large in scale and were probably once part of a large structure. The Greek inscription at Oğlakçı records that Bishop Thomas started 'this work' in 542.[512] We do not know what 'this work' is, but it is worth considering that it is the building of the Octagon. When the Eternal Peace was signed between the Romans and the Persians in 532, the dux of Mesopotamia was moved from Dara to Constantia. As a result, Constantia gained more importance. Although the year 542, the date of the inscription mentioned above, is only two years after the failure of Eternal Peace between the two powers, we do know that problems started first in the north and by 542 Northern Mesopotamia should have still been stable. Another Greek inscription in one of the private gardens of Burç village near Constantia (Fig. 2.7.6), which is not published yet, reads: For an eternal memorial in the time of the most holy bishop Paul in the year 907 (595/6).[513] This might be Pawlos of Tella, the non-Chalcedonian bishop of Tella, who was expelled in 599 by Dometius of Melitene.[514] It is not clear from the inscription if Paul built the memorial mentioned in the inscription or if he left a trace on a monumental building, as the size of the inscription indicates.

Another possible alternative for the dedication that I want to introduce is St. Stephen. A Greek inscription that was found in the city records a church (?) dedicated to the Protomartyr (who is usually St. Stephen), built by the bishop

[510] Andrade, 'The Syriac Life of John of Tella'.

[511] Kleinbauer, 'The Origins and Functions of the Aisled Tetraconch Churches', 89–114, 111.

[512] Canali De Rossi, *Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente Greco*, n. 44. For a photograph of the inscription: Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Church of Virgin at Amida', 435, fig. 11.

[513] I received the photograph of the inscription from Sinan Kaplan just before the completion of the book. I thank Andrew Palmer for reading it and for his help in trying to contextualize it.

[514] L. Van Rompay, 'Pawlos of Tella', in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 325.

Fig. 2.7.6 Inscription from Constantia (probably from Octagon), now in Burç village, turned upside down to show the inscription correctly
Source: Courtesy of Sinan Kaplan.

Sergius with the offering of fruit-bearing lands.[515] This piece of information is significant as from a recently translated *mimro* (homily) of Jacob of Sarug, we learn that the Persians converted the Church of St. Stephen in Amid to a fire temple during the Sasanian occupation of the city between 503 and 505.[516] We also know that in the middle of the fifth century, Theodosius II asked Bishop Rabbula to convert a synagogue in Edessa to a church dedicated to St. Stephen. Thus, churches dedicated to St. Stephen existed in the cities of the region. There may have been a tradition to have a monument dedicated to him in all of these frontier cities.[517]

2.7.2 Around Constantia

Mango notes that the Great Britain War Office, Eastern Turkey Section recorded seventy-seven ruins between Mardin and Viranşehir in the early twentieth century.[518] The region deserves a detailed field survey. Here we provide only an overview. When we look at the region around Constantia, two areas seem to stand out with their Late Antique remains. The first stretches to the north-east of Constantia and the other is the Tektek Mountains which is to the south-west of Constantia.

[515] Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien*, 404, inscr. no. 4.
[516] Debié, 'Guerres et religions'.
[517] I had in the past argued that Saint Thomas might be another alternative for the dedication of the Octagon, see Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Church of Virgin at Amida', 425.
[518] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 117.

2.7.2.1 North of Constantia

According to the archives of Mardin Museum, mosaics were found in rescue excavations in a settlement called Sisan. Pınarcık, which is further north-west, has foundations of Late Antique buildings.[519] To the north of Pınarcık are the ruins of Rabat Castle which was identified as Siphrius, one of the fortresses strengthened by Justinian. On this site, some remains have been identified as a church.[520] To the north of this settlement, in Gola near Göktaş, a church has been excavated. To the east of Göktaş, there are remains of a monastery dedicated to Mor Daniel of Aghlosh, known also as Deyr Metinan.[521] It has architectural sculpture identical to that in the main church of Dayr az-Zaʿfaran. In fact, these locations are only 60 kilometres away from each other. Around 15 kilometres to the west of the Monastery of Deyr Metinan is Kuruçay, from where mosaics with Syriac inscriptions that are today displayed in the Mardin Museum have been uncovered. In Kerküşti (which is on the main road between Viranşehir to Kızıltepe) mosaics with Greek inscriptions were found (now in the Mardin Museum).[522] Burç and Oğlakçı, two neighbouring villages just to the north of Viranşehir, have architectural fragments. Some are from the village and some have been brought there. Around 50 kilometres to the north-west of Constantia, in Alagün village, a basalt block with an unpublished Syriac inscription recording the building of a baptistery (?) in 491/2 (?) is reused today in a garden wall (Fig. 2.7.7).[523] In addition to this fragment, there are traces of Late Antique structures in the village. All these suggest that there might be many other yet undiscovered settlements and inscriptions in the region.

The recent finds in Gola near Göktaş are especially remarkable as they include mosaics with figures, Syriac inscriptions, and a bema.[524] The survival of this latter

[519] Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin', 213.

[520] Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin', 215.

[521] Wiessner, *Nordmesopotamische Ruinenstätte*, fig. 7. This monastery was active in Theodotus's life time. Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, 187.5. A. Palmer is preparing a translation of the Life of Daniel of Aghlosh.

[522] Mango and Mundell Mango, 'Inscriptions de la Mésopotamie du Nord'. In 2014, new mosaics were found in Viranşehir (Fevzi Şıhanloğlu Caddesi). They were covered again for protection. http://www.urfanatik.com/yerel/viransehirde-mozaik-ortaya-cikti-h14857.html.

[523] I would like to thank David Taylor for reading this inscription for me. It reads: 'In the year eight-hundred and three (491/2) was made the baptistery[?] this, in the days of Sargis the Bishop, and of Daniel[?] the Periodeutes and Jacob the priest and Shlixa and Awg[in?] and Hannan [?] the deacons and Wasib [?]—the subdeacon and Zota the st[eward?] and Sargis and Gadya [?] the stone-masons.'

[524] For some photos, see https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/seyahat/galeri-mardinde-1624-yillik-kiliseye-ait-mozaikler-gun-yuzune-cikariliyor-41617857/8 (News are from September 2020). Accessed on 5 December 2020. Volkan Bağlayıcı from the Mardin Museum and Charlotte Labedan-Kodaş are working on a detailed publication (Découverte d'une église à bêma et de sa mosaïque en Anatolie orientale, forthcoming). Gola has been identified as Beth Maʿde or Bemaʿde that was mentioned in the Life of Theodotus. Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, 150.1. Bağlayıcı kindly provided a high-resolution image of the aerial photograph published in the newspaper and granted me permission to comment on the plan of the church.

Fig. 2.7.7 Syriac inscription from Alagün, turned upside down to show inscription correctly

liturgical furniture is significant because although we knew from the textual sources that bemata existed in Northern Mesopotamia,[525] there was no archaeological record of it in the region, despite the fact that we find around forty-five

[525] When describing the building of the Church of Mor Theodore, Simeon is recorded to have brought marble slabs from the coast for the main altar and for the bema. *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §21. The *Life* of Theodotus of Amida records that Theodotus gave a sermon from the bema of the church. Palmer, *Life* of Theodotus of Amida, 140.1. We do not know which church this is, but it might be the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Amida. *Sogitha* on the Hagia Sophia at Edessa also mentions a bema, see Strophe 15 (Palmer, 'Inauguration anthem of Hagia Sophia', 133).

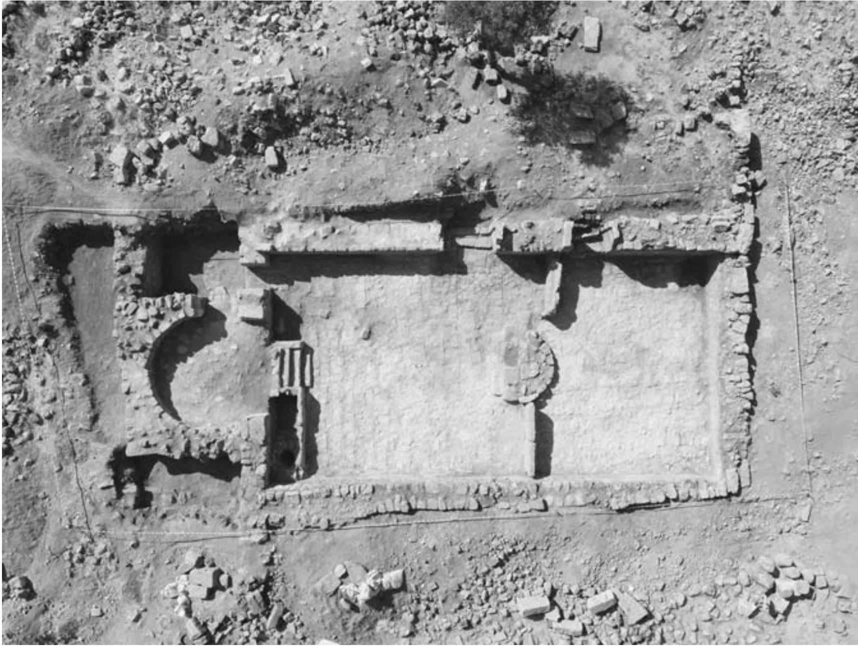

Fig. 2.7.8 The aerial view of the church in Gola near Göktaş.
Source: Courtesy of Volkan Bağlayıcı from Mardin Museum.

examples in Limestone Massif in Syria.[526] Bemata, that were so far found in Syrian churches, appear in parish churches. The plan type of the church in Gola near Göktaş is hall type, which is the plan type used in the parish churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin, and thus points to it being a village church. This new find is critical for explaining some of the features of Ṭur ʿAbdin churches. The walls flanking the bema, that we see in the aerial photograph (Fig. 2.7.8), clearly divides the nave into two and the two entrances on the south wall lead to these two parts. The easternmost entrance on the south wall was for men/clergy and the western one was for women. For Syria, it has been suggested that there were wooden barriers attached to the stone furniture to divide the nave into two parts. A modern wooden barrier existed in Mor Dimet in Zaz until recently (at least until 2005) (Fig. 3.2.6) but is removed now. Today, the genders are divided to the north and south sides.

The existence of a bema in this church shows that it was an early church, as the liturgy of the bema fell into disuse after the seventh or eighth century.[527] As the churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin continued to be used, bemata were probably removed. The only surviving liturgical furniture we have is a pulpit in the Church of Mor

[526] E. Loosley, *The Architecture and Liturgy of the Bema in Fourth- to Sixth-Century Syrian Churches* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). (Originally published in Kaslik: Parole de l'Orient, 2003, 1, 108).

[527] I thank Emma Loosley for replying to my questions.

ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze (Fig. 3.2.7). The church in Gola near Göktaş is also significant for its room to the south of the apse, which is enclosed within the south wall of the church, like in Limestone Massif churches. In Ṭur ʿAbdin churches, these rooms are usually in line with the wall of the narthex of the church, which is to the south of the nave. This room is entered from both the nave and the sanctuary. This is a common arrangement in Ṭur ʿAbdin but rare in Limestone Massif.

The mosaic of the church in Gola has depictions of animals, personification of months, a large cross, and Syriac inscriptions. One of the inscriptions, which is composed of nine lines, has a date. The newspaper article on the church notes that the date in the inscription is 396. However, the inscription seems to have been pieced together again. When we consider the style of the figures in the mosaic, we would argue for a later date, fifth or sixth centuries, as the figures in the mosaics are similar to those in the Yolbilen mosaic (dated to 562) (Fig. 2.7.10) and the mosaics further north in Yukarı Göklü (Halfeti in Urfa, dated to 483) and Hazinedere (Siverek in Urfa, dated to 556).[528]

2.7.2.2 South of Constantia and the Tektek Mountains

The other region where settlements with Late Antique remains clustered is to the south and south-west of Viranşehir, stretching to the Tektek Mountains. Detailed fieldwork promises exciting discoveries in this region. Some of the most prominent remains are just to the south of Constantia. Amongst those is a rock-cut complex at Akkese (Fig. 2.7.9), which may have been the well-known Monastery of Phesilta, the monastery of Jacob Baradaeus or Burdoyo, discussed above.[529] The church of this monastery has distinctive architectural sculpture. It is a hall-type church common in the village churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The main reason for the identification was its name, which means ‘quarry’, its description as being by a river, and the presence of peacocks and niches, which would suggest a burial function. However, there are some aspects that do not match the story. Theodosius, a presbyter and stylite of the Monastery of Phesiltha, continued to write the story of the life of Baradaeus,[530] meaning that there was a stylite in the monastery. The presence of a stylite points to a larger monastery that probably had more significant buildings and visibility. The fact that the monastery existed before and after Baradaeus also points to a more sophisticated group of buildings. Lastly, if Baradaeus’s relics were brought back from Egypt, they deserved a better presentation than would have been possible in a niche. ‘Phesiltha’ also means hewn stone in Syriac. So we may in fact assume the monastery was made of cut stone. This is

[528] Önal, *Urfa-Edessa Mozaikleri*, 127, 130.

[529] E. Keser-Kayaalp, ‘A Newly Discovered Rock-cut Complex: Monastery of Phesīlthā?’, *IM* 58 (2008): 261–83. Bağlayıcı and Labedan-Kodaş also date it to the end of fifth century (Découverte d’une église, forthcomimg).

[530] John of Ephesus, ‘Lives’, vol. 19, 576.

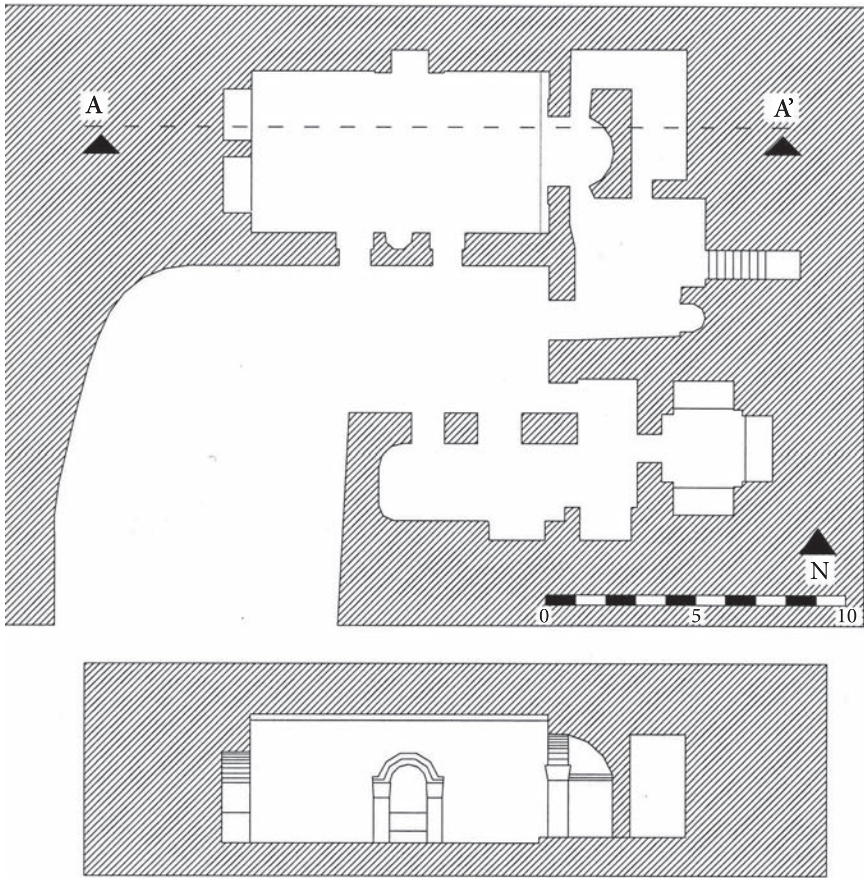

Fig. 2.7.9 Plan and section of the rock-carved monastery from Akkese (Hanefiş)

not very helpful in the sense that the Late Antique monuments of Northern Mesopotamia are mostly built with well-cut blocks.

We can consider another structure as a possible candidate for Baradaeus's monastery. In Yolbilen, 2 kilometres south of Constantia, there used to be remains of a *bēth qadishe*. When I first visited the site in 2005, the side walls were preserved up to a certain height and the niches on the walls were visible. The upper structure was completely gone. It had five arcosolia, one on the north side and two on the east and west walls,[531] similar to the *bēth qadishe* in Mor Gabriel monastery, although the latter has two parallel halls.[532] The

[531] Önal, *Urfa-Edessa Mozaikleri*, 114.

[532] For pictures of the structure and mosaic in situ in 2005, see E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Beth Qadishe in the Monasteries of Northern Mesopotamia', *PdO* 35 (2010): 429–52.

Fig. 2.7.10 Mosaic of the burial chamber in Yolbilen
Source: Courtesy of Mehmet Önal.

Yolbilen structure was transferred to the Mosaic Museum in Şanlıurfa in 2013 with its walls of large ashlars.

The whole floor of the *bēth qadishe* was covered with a mosaic, which bears a Syriac inscription in the middle of the composition and one to the side (Fig. 2.7.10). The inscription in the centre tells us that the mosaic was laid in 873 Seleucid year (AD 561/2) by Simeon, the abbot, and Elpidius and John (?), the priests of this monastery. The inscription is in a circle, with the symbols of a man, eagle, lion, and ox, depicted as emerging from the circle. In the Syriac tradition, these figures do not always refer to the Evangelists as they usually do in the Western tradition, but given also its location in a burial chamber, they probably represent resurrection, soul, and human nature. The tetramorph (four shapes) is a motif that we find in wall mosaics or frescoes but not on pavement, which makes this example unusual. In the Ascension scene in the Syriac Rabbula Gospels (dating 586, ten years later than the mosaic), we find a tetramorph supporting Christ's mandorla.[533] There, Christ is depicted riding a two-wheeled chariot with the four creatures supporting him. The image continued to exist in the Syriac tradition, but not in the region. [534]

There are other animal figures around the central medallion, such as a deer, duck, and tiger. To the west there is another Syriac inscription, which has been badly damaged.[535] The *bēth qadishe* is a type of building associated with monasteries. In fact, building a *bēth qadishe* seems to have been a priority when founding a monastery.[536] We may suggest that this building belonged to the Monastery of Phesiltha, and Baradaeus's relics could have been put in this burial chamber. However, there are mentions of other monasteries in the sources for this area, for example, Bēth ʿArabāyē.[537] The *bēth qadishe* may have belonged to that monastery or to a monastery that has not been recorded.

There are other ruins in the Tektek Mountains that are potentially monasteries, although a detailed survey is needed to confirm their identification. For example, the ruins in Çatalat hint at a substantial church building, probably a hall-type church, of which the apse archivolt is still standing. In an earlier photograph of the ruin, we see a tower, a tomb-like structure near the church, which was similar to

[533] D. H. Wright, 'The Date and Arrangement of the Illustrations in the Rabbula Gospels', *DOP* 27 (1973): 197–208.

[534] The two examples we know are in Deir al-Surian and nearby Deir Abu Maqar in a later period. I thank Mat Immerzel for this information. See also K. Innemée, 'Recent Discoveries of Wall-Paintings in Deir al-Surian', *Hugoye, Journal of Syriac Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2.

[535] For more pictures of the mosaic in the museum, see http://www.manar-al athar.ox.ac.uk, and search: Viransehir tomb mosaic, in the folder entitled 'Asia Minor_eastern'. There is no real parallel to the tetramorph in this mosaic, but the arrangement of the other animals has been widely used. See P. Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban: décor, archéologie et liturgie* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art, 1988). The human image and its style recalls the mosaic in the Church of St. George at Philadelphia (Amman):M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman: American Center of Oriental Research, 1992), 262.

[536] Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Beth Qadishe', 335.

[537] Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, 30.

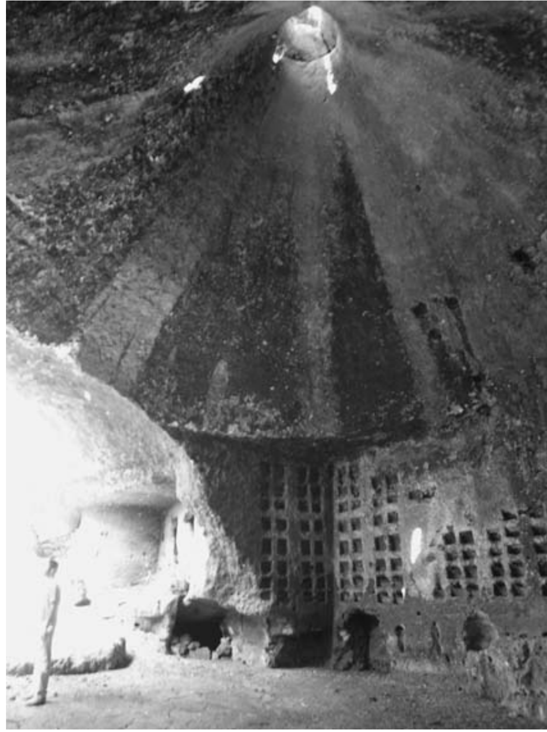

Fig. 2.7.11 Rock-carved space in Senemağara

that in Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa.[538] Other probable Late Antique sites in the Tektek Mountains are Şuayip Şehir, Betik, Zagzug, Senemağara, and Qasr el-Banat. None of these sites have been investigated archaeologically. Şuayip Şehir is a well-preserved settlement,[539] but there is no sign of Christianity there that would suggest that it was a Byzantine settlement. Betik has a house-like structure. Zagzug has a rock-cut church with a cross carved in the conch and some Syriac inscriptions that wait to be studied.

With a substantial three-storied structure that looks over the plain, Senemağara might have been a rural estate. The structure has moulded arches and an exterior cornice. The lower level of this structure is today used as a stable. Behind this structure there is a rocky slope in which two massive spaces were carved. One is a structure with niches on the east, north, and south walls. The niches are topped with archivolts, suggesting a burial chamber. The other is a monumental space with small squares carved in its wall and has a domical ceiling (Fig. 2.7.11). It must

[538] C. Kürkçüoğlu and Z. Karahan Kara, *Adım Adım Viranşehir* (Şanlıurfa: Viranşehir Kaymakamlığı Kültür ve Turizm Yayınları, 2005), 57.

[539] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, pls. 254–56.

Fig. 2.7.12. Sculpture in Senemağara

Fig. 2.7.13. A room in Senemağara illustrating the construction technique

have been used as a dovecote, suggesting arable farming around this settlement. There is also significant architectural sculpture carved on a rock face, which shows parallels with some sculpture of the Limestone Massif (Fig. 2.7.12).[540] Another building in the complex is built of vertical blocks of stone, a technique that was also common in the Limestone Massif (Fig. 2.7.13).

At Qasr el-Banat we find extensive Syriac inscriptions,[541] a Greek inscription,[542] a structure with an apse, another structure with ashlar blocks used vertically, and many architectural fragments. In addition, we find a burial structure with eight *arcosolia*. The arches of these *arcosolia* are profiled and there are crosses carved in between them. The ceiling is flat. The space is used as a storage place today, and it is not possible to make a detailed survey. Most of the inscriptions are carved in large letters on the rock surface outside, and include the names of the men who lived there, suggesting the existence of a monastery of which this burial chamber was probably a part.[543]

[540] A. Naccache, *Le décor des églises de villages d'Antiochène du IVe au VIIe siècle* (Paris: Geuthner, 1992), t. II, pl. 333.

[541] Moritz, 'Syrische Inschriften', 168–71.

[542] Oppenheim and Lukas, 'Griechische und Lateinische Inschriften', 97.

[543] For some recent photographs: see S. E. Güler, 'Urfa'nın doğusunda Erken Hıristiyan Dönemine ait bir Süryani Manastırı Kalıntısı: Kasr el-Benat', *Şanlıurfa Kültür Sanat Tarih Turizm Dergisi* 33 (2019): 28–35.

3
Ṭur ʿAbdin

3.1 Introduction

Ṭur ʿAbdin is a limestone plateau bounded by the River Tigris in the north and east, by the Mesopotamian plain in the south, and by Mardin in the west (Fig. 3.1.1).[1] The region has been settled from the Assyrian period onwards and the Syriac names of many sites have Assyrian origins.[2] The continuity of the place names has been interpreted as a result of Ṭur ʿAbdin being a retreat area, typical for a mountain region.[3] At the end of the sixth century, 'Turabdium' is mentioned as a bishopric under Dara in the *Notitia Antiochena*, besides Theodosiopolis and Banasimeon.[4] Despite being under Muslim rule since the seventh century, it was populated mostly by Syriac Christians until the last century and retained its importance amongst the community. The late patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox church, Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas (d. 2014), said: 'As Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, we regard Ṭur ʿAbdin as a holy site, second only to Jerusalem, and look on our visits there as pilgrimages.'[5] In the eyes of the contemporary community, the importance of Ṭur ʿAbdin extends beyond religion. As other regions of Northern Mesopotamia have lost their Christian character, Ṭur ʿAbdin has become the homeland with which the Syriac Christians associate and identify themselves. Herman Teule even states that 'the disappearance of a Suryoyo presence in Ṭur ʿAbdin would mean the end of a Suryoyo identity'.[6]

[1] It stretches around 260 kilometres west to east from Mardin to Cizre and 70 kilometres north to south from Hasankeyf to Nusaybin. See Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, iii and Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 1–8 for the geography and history of the region.

[2] K. Radner, 'How to Reach the Upper Tigris: The Route through the Tur Abdin', *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 15 (2006): 273–304. See this article also for the reproduction of some of the old maps of the region and for a description of the topographical features of the region. In the past century, the villages were given new Turkish names. The old Syriac names are more appropriate here; but where a village is first mentioned in this book, its Turkish name is added in brackets.

[3] Radner, 'How to Reach the Upper Tigris', 302.

[4] E. Honigmann, 'Studien zur Notitia Antiochena', *BZ* 25 (1925): 60–88.

[5] 'Message of greeting from His Holiness, Patriach Ignatius Zakka I Iwas' in Hollerweger, *Turabdin: Where Jesus' Language is Spoken*, 7.

[6] H. Teule, 'Who are the Syriacs?', in *The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey: And of the Grounds of the Mor Gabriel Monastery*, ed. P. H. Omtzigt et al. (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), 47–57, 56. For the symbolic importance of the churches and monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin, see E. Keser- Kayaalp, 'Preservation of the Architectural Heritage of the Syriac Christians in the Ṭur ʿAbdin: Processes and Varying Approaches', *TÜBA Kültür Envanteri Dergisi* 14 (2016): 57–69.

Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia. Elif Keser Kayaalp, Oxford University Press.
© Elif Keser Kayaalp 2021. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198864936.003.0003

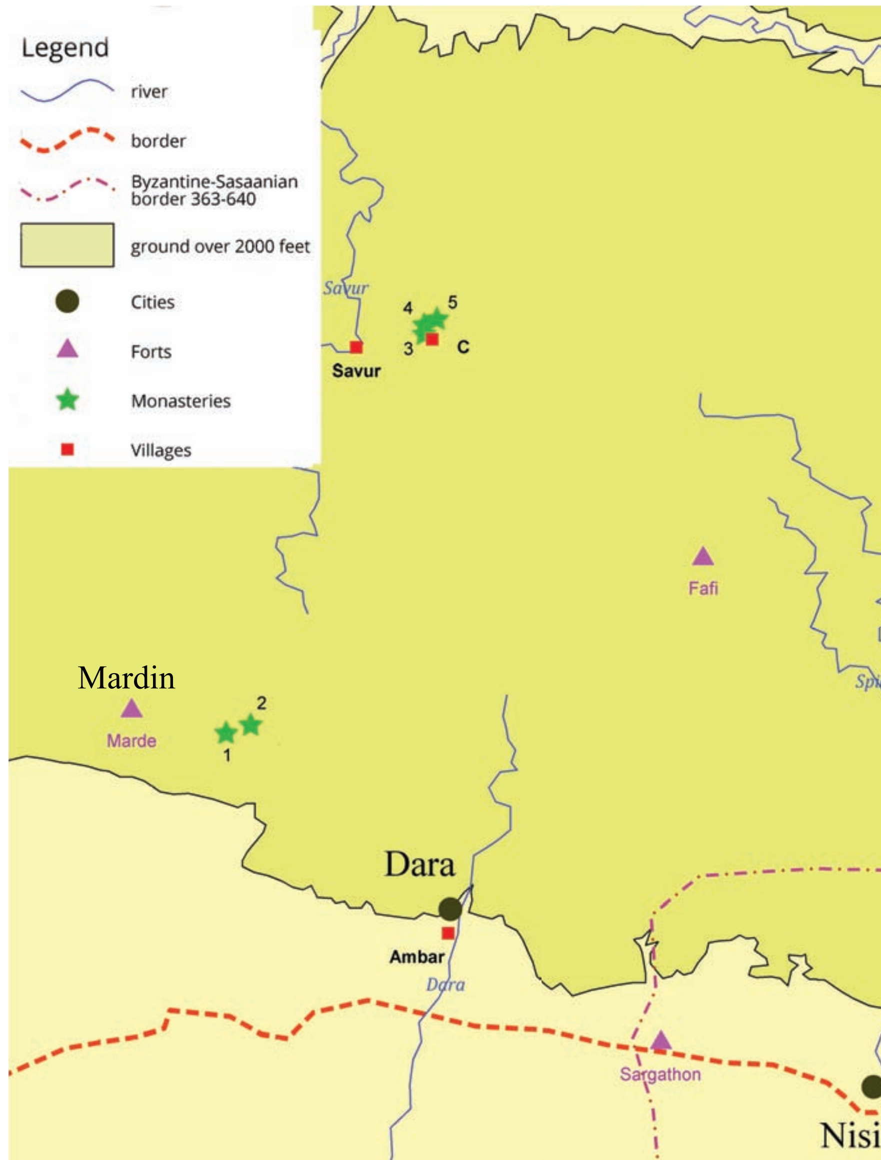

Fig. 3.1.1 Map of Ṭur ʿAbdin showing villages and monasteries mentioned in the book. **List of villages: A**-Ṣālaḥ (Barıştepe), **B**-Zaz (İzbırak), **C**-Qelleth (Dereiçi), **D**-Derikfan (Nurlu), **E**-Marbobo (Günyurdu), **F**-Mʿaare (Eskihisar), **G**-Bēth Qusṭān (Alagöz), **H**-Arkaḥ (Üçköy), **J**-Bēth Manʿem, **K**-ʿArobon (Karalar), **L**- Kfarbe (Güngören), **M**-Anhel (Yemişli), **N**-Bēth Sḇirino (Haberli), **P**-Dera (Dereköy), **Q**-Bēth Ishak (Başakköy), **R**-Midon (Öğündük), **S**-ʿAyn Wardo (Gülgöze), **T**-Kundel, **U**-ʿUrdnus (Bağlarbaşı), **V**-Kfarze (Altıntaş), **W**-Heshterek (Ortaca), **X**-Ḥabsenas (Mercimekli), **Y**-Serhevdana.

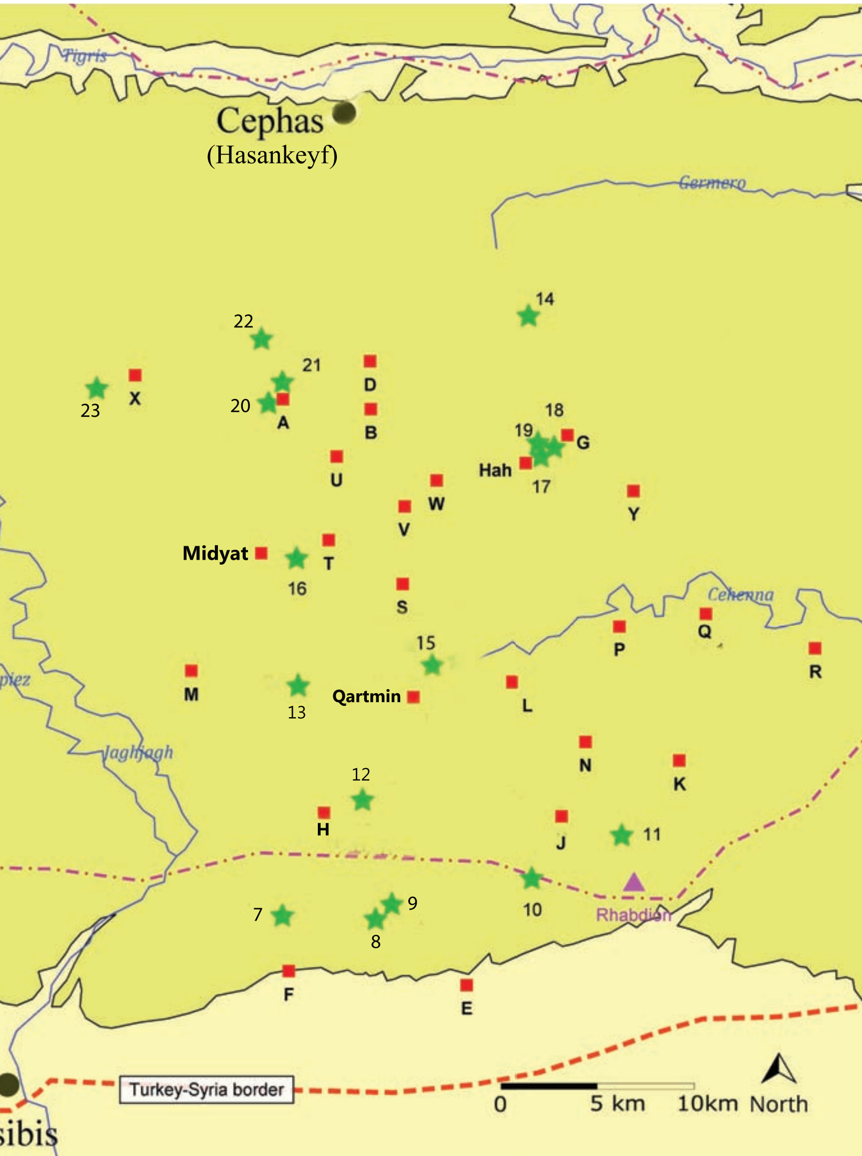

Fig. 3.1.1 *Continued*

List of monasteries: **1**-Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, **2**-Mor Yaʿqub of Sarug, **3**-Mor Abai, **4**-Mor Theodotus, **5**-Mor Dimeṭ, **6**-Mor Daniel, **7**-Mar Yoret Alexandroyo, **8**-Mar Awgin, **9**-Mar Yuḥannan Ṭayyaya, **10**-Mar Abraham Kashkar, **11**-Mor Aḥo, **12**-Mor Melke, **13**-Dayr Kubbuk, **14**-Dayro da-Ṣlibo, **15**-Mor Gabriel, **16**-Mor Abrohom, **17**-Mor Maryam Magdloyto, **18**-Mor Sergius and Bachus, **19**-Mor Yuḥannon, **20**-Mor Yaʿqub, **21**-Mor Barsawmo, **22**-Mor Holo, **23**-Mor Loʿozor. Drawn by the author and Anthony Comfort.

As Sebastian Brock has pointed out, whatever the correct original etymology of its name, Ṭur ʿAbdin is 'quintessentially the mountain of the servants of God' with its monasteries and churches dedicated to local saints.[7] By virtue of the number of its monasteries and the perceived sanctity of its every stone, of which Syrian Orthodox altars in the diaspora are built, Ṭur ʿAbdin has been called 'the Mount Athos of the East'.[8] On both mountains there is indeed a concentration of monasteries. Both 'bastions of Christian Orthodoxy' retained this character through many centuries of Islamic rule. Yet, apart from Karyès, there are no villages on Mount Athos and its monastic settlement began at least two hundred years later than the earliest monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin. If we wish to make a comparison, the Limestone Massif of north-western Syria is more appropriate, because it includes both villages and monasteries.[9] However, there are two important differences. First, the scale: there are around seven hundred settlements in Limestone Massif. This is around ten times more than Ṭur ʿAbdin.[10] Second, there has been continuous habitation in most of the settlements in Ṭur ʿAbdin, whereas most of Limestone Massif settlements were abandoned, probably in the tenth century. This has made extensive field surveys and excavations in some monasteries and villages possible.[11] In the villages of Ṭur ʿAbdin, with few exceptions, the churches are the only early structures that have survived and these have undergone extensive restoration. Because of the difficulties of dating these, chronology has usually been neglected in studies on Ṭur ʿAbdin and some anachronistic suggestions have been made.

[7] S. Brock, 'Tur ʿAbdin—a Homeland of Ancient Syro-Aramaean Culture', in *Tur ʿAbdin: Living Cultural Heritage: Where Jesus' Language is Spoken*, ed. H. Hollerweger (Linz: Rudolf Trauner, 1999), 22–3. The name Ṭur ʿAbdin is discussed by Palmer, Monk and Mason, 28, n. 46. The literal translation is 'the mountain of the slaves'. In the Aramaic dialect of the region, it is interpreted as turo daʿ 'abode 'the mountain of the ascetics' (slaves or servants of God). As mentioned above, the diocese known in Syriac as *Ṭur ʿAbdin* is called 'Turabdium' in the Notitia Antiochena. For this reason, Palmer (personal communication, 10 September 2020) no longer considers it absurd (as he wrote in Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 28, n. 46) that the name Ṭur ʿAbdin was an attempt to make sense of the Greek *To Rhabdion*, 'the stick', the name of the only castle defending the south-eastern approaches to the plateau after the loss of Nisibis and Bezabde. Together with Amida and Cephas, Rhabdion was one of the three fortresses built by Constantine II. For reasons of security there is no access to it today, but Taylor drew a plan in 1865 (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 145) and we have Gertrude Bell's photographs. The photograph of the fortress on the cover of Palmer's book, *Monk and Mason*, was taken in the 1970s by Hannes Cornet.

[8] Palmer (*Monk and Mason*, 28, n. 44) suggests that this term was first coined by W. A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites* (London: Faith Press, 1923), 98.

[9] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 109.

[10] For the number of villages, see Section 3.2, 'Villages'.

[11] One of the most recent is: G. Tate et al., *Serǧilla: village d'Apamène, Vol. 1: Une architecture de pierre* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'IFPO, 2013). Other main works are: Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*; Sodini et al., 'Déhès (Syrie du nord)'; Tate, *Les Campagnes de la Syrie du Nord*; G. Tate, 'The Syrian Countryside during the Roman Era', in *The Early Roman Empire in the East*, ed. S. Alcock (Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 55–71. Sodini and Tate revised many of the conclusions of Tchalenko. See also D. Hull, 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis of Monastic Sites in the Northern Limestone Massif, Syria', *Levant* 40/1 (2008): 89–113.

Villages and monasteries are not the only settlements; fortresses also stand out in this landscape.[12] If the villages and monasteries dominate in this chapter, that is because their churches are its main focus. Some sources, mainly hagiographical, mention the relations between villages and monasteries, but they should be used with caution. For example, the paraphrase, in a late Berlin manuscript, of the *Qartmin Trilogy* edited by Palmer claims that Anastasius gave seven villages to the Monastery of Mor Gabriel.[13] Although this source is not reliable, it gives an idea about the perception of the relationship between the villages and a monastery. The *Life* of the fourth-century Mor Yaʿqub of Ṣālaḥ claims that the saint himself accepted no gifts: it was his successor, Mor Daniel, who began to construct monastic buildings and accepted for his monastery the gift of some villages.[14] As for the period after the Arab conquest, the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives (d. 734) records that villages were donated to the Monastery of Mor Gabriel.[15]

These stories portray monasteries as the owners of villages; but there is epigraphical evidence of the support that villagers offered to the monastery. The capacity and initiative of the villagers in terms of building is illustrated in detail by an eighth-century inscription in the church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ which lists the names of the benefactors both from the village and the neighbouring villages (twenty-five of them), together with the sum given by each.[16] The collective act of rebuilding the church illustrates the importance of private patronage in that period. New monasteries continued to be built. Their churches were smaller than the earlier ones, as will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.3, 'Monasteries'.

Regarding the relationship between villages and monasteries, a pattern consisting of a village and its satellite-monastery or monasteries has been pointed out.[17] Ḥabsenas[18] (Mercimekli), Ṣālaḥ (Barıştepe), Ḥāḥ (Anıtlı), Bēth Sbirina (Haberli), Bēth Manʿem, Arkah (Üçköy), Qelleth (Dereiçi), ʿAyn Wardo (Gülgöze), Kfarze (Altıntaş), and Midyat have been given as examples.[19] The large maps accompanying the books by Helga Anschütz and Gernot Wiessner, are extremely useful

[12] Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin'.

[13] This claim is not found in the older text, which is paraphrased there. Palmer says that this information is not reliable (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 110, n. 198).

[14] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 110, n. 198

[15] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 164.

[16] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 186.

[17] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 107–12.

[18] Although it is locally called Ḥabisnās (I thank Shabo Talay for this information) or Hapsus: Demir, *Tur Abdin'de bir Süryani Mıhallemi Köyü*; it has been written as Ḥabsenas or Ḥabsenus in previous English publications and in the Syriac gazetteer: http://syriaca.org/place/241.html#bib241-4. To avoid confusion, Ḥabsenas is used here.

[19] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 28. Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères' has a section entitled 'Relations' (p. 241), however, it focuses on patronage and not on physical relations.

in visualizing this relation physically.[20] In the map in Fig. 3.1.1,[21] I show only the monasteries and villages that have remains dating between the sixth and eighth centuries, and that are discussed in the text.

The economic relations that determined the proximity of the villages and monasteries in Limestone Massif[22] seem to be present also in Ṭur ʿAbdin.[23] To give an idea of the distances, we can take the Monastery of Mor Loʿozor as an example. It is located only 300 metres away from the village of Ḥabsenas to the south-west (Fig. 3.1.2).[24] This distance is the minimum determined by Hull for the monasteries and villages of the Limestone Massif.[25] The nearest villages to Ḥabsenas are those of Acırlı (3 kilometres away) and Ṣālaḥ (5 kilometres away). A similar proximity, around 350 metres, can be observed between the Monastery of Maryam Magdloyto (Mary Magdalen, also known as Dayr Habis) and the village of Ḥāḥ; and also between the Monastery of Mor Sergius and Bacchus in Bēth Kustan and the village of Ḥāḥ. Fig. 3.1.3 shows Ḥāḥ in relation to a further away monastery (around 650 metres), the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon, which we see in the foreground.

[20] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*; H. Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur ʿAbdin: eine altchristliche Bevölkerungsgruppe zwischen Beharrung, Stagnation und Auflösung* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1984). Anschütz's maps are especially useful as they show the change in the topography over the centuries. Anschütz did detailed research on the villages of the region in the seventies. Her work had an ethnographic and anthropological focus: she was interested in how the population changed over the centuries. She designates Midyat, Kerburan, Nusaybin, İdil, Gercüş, Savur, and Ömerli as the main settlements and subordinates the surrounding settlements to these. She gives several maps of the region, the first being up to the Arab conquest. On this she marks only the monasteries. Not all of these are from that period; in fact, many of them must have been built or rebuilt after the Arab conquest. For the period between 630 and 1000, she shows villages on the map. For the period between 1000 and 1400 she focuses on the formation of new bishoprics and the prominence of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel. She argues that from 1400 to 1760, Dayr al-Zaʿfarān and Ṣālaḥ kept their importance but Ḥāḥ lost its prominence. From the eighteenth century to the First World War, Mardin and Midyat stand out. She also observed the situation in the seventies when she travelled there. Her work is important because she takes chronology into consideration and acknowledges the changes in the landscape. However, it is not clear on what basis the earlier maps of the region are drawn.

[21] The names of the villages and saints are written variously in different publications. For multiple alternatives, see Syriac gazetteer: http://syriaca.org/place/. As for the variation of Mor and Mar: Mor is preferred in the West Syrian monasteries and Mar in the East Syrian monasteries.

[22] Hull's study of the Limestone Massif, focusing on the relationship of monasteries with other settlements and topography, shows that more than 50 per cent of the monasteries are within the radius of 1 kilometre from a settlement and more than 80 per cent are within that of 2 kilometres. To understand if that was a result of a necessity due to the intense settlement in the landscape, Hull experimented with the help of a computer program to randomly distribute the monasteries to the topography. He found out that the real monasteries were in fact closer to the settlements than the randomly distributed ones. Hull, 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis', 95.

[23] This remains to be studied for Ṭur ʿAbdin. For East Syrian monasteries, C. Villagomez, 'The Fields, Flocks, and Finances of Monks: Economic Life at Nestorian Monasteries, 500–850'. PhD Dissertation, University of California, 1998. For the proximity of villages and monasteries in Upper Egypt, see J. E. Goehring, 'Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt', *HTR* 89/3 (1996): 267–85.

[24] Another example for the close proximity of a monastery to a village is the fortress-like Monastery of Mor Abhai and the village of Beth Maʿnem, see Google Earth photograph in Comfort, 'Fortresses of the Tur Abdin', fig. 4.

[25] Hull, 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis', 95.

Fig. 3.1.2 Aerial view of the monastery of Mor Loʿozor, the village of Ḥabsenas, recent fish pools, and constructions
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

Fig. 3.1.3 Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon with the village of Ḥāḥ and the Monastery of Mor Sergius and Bachus in the background
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

A detailed survey of the relationships of settlements remains to be done. Here, as an example, I shall present one of the relationships that seem to be repeated in Ṭur ʿAbdin, namely a triple arrangement of a village, a built monastery, and a group of rock-carved spaces.[26] I shall mention four examples of the appearance of such a relationship here, but there may be many more. The hills and natural caves of Ṭur ʿAbdin readily lend themselves to human use.[27] The soft limestone makes it possible to carve smooth spaces out of the rocks.[28] One might think that the rock-carved spaces made by ascetics would be in elevated locations for the purposes of seclusion. However, there are some rock-carved complexes in Ṭur ʿAbdin that are in close proximity to both a village and a built monastery.

Our first example is the triple arrangement that is formed by the village of Ṣālaḥ, the built monastery of Mor Yaʿqub, and the rock-carved monastery of Mor Barṣawmo. The Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub and the village of Ṣālaḥ are only 50 metres away from each other. The rock-carved monastery of Mor Barṣawmo is around 800 metres, as the crow flies, to the north-east of Mor Yaʿqub. One can see both the village of Ṣālaḥ and the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub from the Monastery of Mor Barṣawmo.[29] The Monastery of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, the monasteries on Mount Ḥazro, and the village of Qalʿat al-mar'a comprise the second example for such a relation (Fig. 3.1.4).[30] The third example comprises the Monastery of Mor Aḥo, on a hill close by the village of Kafro ʿEloyto (Arıca), and the rock-cut Monastery of Mor Barṣawmo between this monastery and the same village. The village of Qelleth, the nearby large monastery of Mor Abai, and the partially carved monastery of Mor Dimeṭ provide yet another example for the model. It is difficult to date rock-carved complexes, thus we need to be careful with the chronology, but parts of the rock-carved Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub of Sarug in Mount Ḥazro was built with the large ashlar blocks typical of sixth-century buildings of the region; the Monastery of Mor Dimeṭ at Qelleth probably dates from the eighth century.

[26] All are called monasteries today, although some include limited spaces and it may be better to call them a hermitage. However, since they are still venerated as monasteries, I kept their names. The issue of what a monastery is has been a popular question in the scholarship, especially after the redefinition of some of the monasteries in Cappadocia as elite houses (for bibliography see P. Niewöhner, 'Monasteries', in *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2017), 119–28, n. 42).

[27] In the Egyptian context, the practice of those monks who marked the landscape by claiming caves, mountains, abandoned tombs, and quarries is inspiring for the study of Ṭur ʿAbdin; see D. Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archaeological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[28] E. Hammer's dissertation submitted to Harvard University, entitled *Local Landscapes of Pastoral Nomads in South-eastern Turkey* (2012) is relevant here for an anthropological approach to the use of landscape features, including caves.

[29] For photographs and more on the subject, see E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Ṭur ʿAbdin'de üçlü yerleşim modeli: manastır, köy, kayaya oyma manastır', *Ash-Sharq* 1/2 (2017): 193–200.

[30] The rock-carved monasteries and their relation to the topography and each other wait to be studied in detail, especially the five monasteries on Mount Ḥazro located to the north, north-east of the well-known Dayr al-Zaʿfarān monastery.

Fig. 3.1.4 Dayr al-Zaʿfarān with hills around it and the Mesopotamian plain in the background (taken from the monasteries in Mount Hazro)

These examples suggest that the relationship may be valid for the early period studied here.

Regarding the distribution of monasteries in the landscape and their relationship with each other, several remarks can be made. The monasteries dedicated to Mor Aḥo, the saint who is believed to have brought a stolen fragment of The Cross to the region, are located at the edges of Ṭur ʿAbdin, in the north, north-east, east and south-east, probably providing spiritual protection for the region, the eastern half of which protruded into enemy territory.[31] Another thing worthy of notice is the inter-visibility of monasteries with towers. From the Monastery of Mor Abḥai near Bēth Manʿem, the tower of that of Mor Aḥo, near Hatem Tai Kalesi, can be seen to the south-east.[32]

The concept of a 'mother-monastery', and the 'daughter-monasteries' that surround it, is another pattern that determines the relation of monasteries with each other in the landscape. The Monastery of Mor Abai near Qelleth is named in a colophon as the Monastery of Mart Maryam, the Mother of God, Mor Abai the Elder and his disciple Mor Abai, Mor Theodotus and his disciple Mor Yawsep, and Mor Shabbai and his disciple Mor Dimeṭ. As there are two smaller monasteries

[31] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères', 231.

[32] This observation which is also valid for the buildings in the triple arrangement that I discussed before needs to be taken further.

in the vicinity of Mor Abai which are dedicated to Mor Theodotus and Mor Dimeṭ, Palmer suggests that these monasteries were thought to be parts of Mor Abai.[33] The East Syrian monasteries on Mount Izlo also have such a relation: the Monastery of Mar Yuḥannan Ṭayyaya was founded by monks from the Monastery of Mar Awgin; and both were governed, at one time, by the superior of the mother-monastery.[34]

A similar relationship (though undocumented) may be assumed to have existed between the great monastery once dedicated to Mor Shemʿun, and now known as that of Mor Gabriel, and the smaller monasteries dedicated to Mor Shemʿun to the south, east, and west of this monastery, though at a greater distance from the presumed mother-house.[35] Along with these physical relations, which are our main focus, there are also intangible aspects, like memory and identity. The churches and monasteries were dedicated to the saints as their eternal dwellings, and a saint is identified with his church.[36]

3.2 Villages

3.2.1 Settlement Features

I counted approximately forty villages in Ṭur ʿAbdin, which have churches or monasteries in or near them, that can be dated to the Late Antique period. Based on Wiessner's study, Palmer notes that we can plot more than fifty settlements with churches in the region, including churches dating to later periods.[37] Anschütz lists around eighty settlements (some of which do not have churches) and her main classification is based on the different ethnic communities in them. In a passing note, she classifies the villages of the region also according to the

[33] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères', 194.

[34] S. Brock, 'Notes on Some Monasteries on Mount Izla', *Abr-Nahrain* 19 (1980–81): 1–19; reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, Collected Studies Series 199 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), XV, 12.

[35] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères', 216.

[36] Based on a hierotopical approach to Ṭur ʿAbdin, focusing on the relation between the hagiographic compositions and sacred spaces, Reyhan Durmaz describes the visual and physical relations between the villages, monasteries, and caves as 'a multi-layered sacred order'. R. Durmaz, 'Sacred Spaces and Sacred Lives: Hierotopical Perceptions in Tur 'Abdin in the Middle Ages Reconstructed through Local Hagiographical Traditions', *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 19 (2013): 33–46.

[37] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 186. The *Life* of Mor Gabriel, although this account is not contemporary and considered to be not reliable, tells us that when he died in 667, not long after the Arab conquest of the region, 'all the diocese was foregathered for the burial of the saint, from the great river Tigris to the river of Gozarto d–Shuʿo which is the river Harbo, all this region of Ṭur ʿAbdin, 243 villages in all. There was an enquiry and a count was made of the people who came to the burial of our Father Mor Gabriel and their number was four thousand five hundred and thirty-four'; Qartmin Trilogy, *The Lives of Samuel, Simeon and Gabriel*, ed. and trans. A. Palmer, microfiche to A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 87. Palmer dates the composition of this text between 819 and *c.*969 (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 14).

topography, mainly based on the location of the village (on a hill or a mound) and on the farmlands that surround it.[38] This kind of classification gives the impression of an agricultural region, similar to the productive Limestone Massif.[39]

As for the layout of the villages, our knowledge is scarce.[40] However, we can make the following general points: the churches are usually located at the highest point of the settlement and the churches in the villages are usually distinctive in their masonry work, with, in some cases, remains of remarkably large ashlar blocks. In the case of the churches of Mor Barḥadbsabbo in ʿAyn Wardo (Fig. 3.2.1) and Mor Addai at Bēth Ishaq (Başakköy), the parish church has almost been turned into a castle, with parts dating to different periods, including recent times.[41] The other buildings of the villages are usually much later structures, built out of stones that have been crudely cut. The churches of the villages are dedicated to numerous saints.[42] These villages are today connected by the 'stational' use of the churches according to the liturgical calendar; that is to say on the 'Shahro' (or vigil) of a particular saint according to the calendar. The commemoration takes place in the church dedicated to that particular saint and the community of a cluster of villages comes together.[43] The churches of the villages have today turned into building complexes usually surrounded by walls.

[38] Of these villages, some were not solely Christian villages, and some were later. Anschütz classified the villages of Ṭur ʿAbdin in five categories (without, however, stating which villages were included in which category) based on their layout. Her classification is as follows: (1) villages set out as terraces, situated on the slopes of hills, within an irregularly laid rocky area with shared farmland; (2) villages on small hills or ridges with farmland in the shape of blocks or strips; (3) villages located on a cultivated hill/mound amongst farmland in the shape of blocks or strips; (4) villages in the south foothills of hills with farmland in the shape of strips in the Syrian Plain; (5) villages on the slope of a terrace-formed valley with farmland in the shape of blocks or strips. Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen*, 33. Anschütz's classification is confusing and requires further investigation. Nevertheless, the study she attempted is important for understanding the topography of the region. Here, I give some examples, which may shed more light on Anschütz's classification. For example, 'Urdnus and Bēth Sbirina lie on a slightly high mound. ʿAyn Wardo, Kfarze, and Kfarbe, on the other hand are on small hills. Savur can be considered as lying on the terraces formed on a hill. Ḥāḥ and Zaz lie on almost flat plains. Qelleth is secluded with hills around it.

[39] For Limestone Massif, Georges Tchalenko attempted to find out if one could draw conclusions about the nature of the villages according to their names. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie*, I, 312, n. 6. For example, are beit (bēth) and ba (Greek epoikion) and kefr (Greek kômé) used to distinguish between the villages that belonged to a single landlord and those which were inhabited by free people? In Ṭur ʿAbdin, some village names begin with *ba* and *bēth* or *beit*, meaning house, such as Bēth Manʿem, Bēth Qustan, Bēth Sbirina; and other names begin with *kefr*, meaning village, such as Kfarbūrān, Kfarze, Kfarbe, Kefro Elayto. Although the names of the villages of Ṭur ʿAbdin display the same variety, they do not say much about the nature of the village.

[40] Only a schematic drawing of Ḥāḥ has been produced in M. Mundell Mango, 'The Architecture of the Syriac Churches', in *Architecture of the Eastern Churches* (Booklet of a conference in Birmingham in 1981), 13–26.

[41] See Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten im Ṭūr ʿAbdīn*, IV/I, 25–32 for an image of the latter.

[42] A few of the saints are local (like Simeon of the Olives); some, like Mor Quryaqos, whose relics belonged to a monastery near Dara in the early sixth century (as Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor (ix 6d) tells us), belong to Mesopotamia; and some belong to the Church of the East, such as Saint Yohannan Dailam, the patron of the church at Qelleth (Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, Introduction).

[43] We do not know if that was the case in the region also in Late Antiquity, but it was practised in Late Antique Antioch: Mayer and Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 182–91.

Fig. 3.2.1 View of the village of ʿAyn Wardo (Gülgöze)

In the villages, there is usually one church immediately visible, but in Bēth Sbirina, for example, there is one main church and twenty-five chapels. The chapels are scattered all around the village and it is extremely hard to date many of them.[44] Most must be later foundations. In the last few years, the topography has been changing due to the change in population and the addition of mosques. Due to the return of the diaspora community to the homeland, new villas have also been built in and around villages, the most impressive being in Kafro Taḥtoyto (Elbeğendi). In Ḥabsenas, a fish farm has been built, changing the landscape dramatically (Fig. 3.1.2). While a significant number of churches and monasteries lie in ruins as a result of the migrations in the previous century,[45] there are also a considerable number of monuments that have been restored in the past twenty years.[46]

Most of the villages in Ṭur ʿAbdin appear to have been inhabited for long periods of time, but without archaeological field surveys, we are not able to say more. There are a few that were abandoned in an early period, and those could be

[44] A. Varela and P. G. Borbone, 'Églises et Saints au Ṭur ʿAbdin: Basebrin, "Le Village aux 25 Églises" Études Préliminaires', *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 41 (2018): 235–62.

[45] For the monuments under the threat of disappearance, see Keser-Kayaalp (ed.), *Syriac Architectural Heritage under Risk*.

[46] Keser-Kayaalp, 'Preservation of the Architectural Heritage'.

the ones best able to provide information regarding the characteristics of a late antique settlement. Kundel, located 5 kilometres north-west of the better-known village of ʿAyn Wardo is one of them. The Google Earth images clearly show the foundations of the houses and the church at the south end of the plateau on top of the hill across which the village stretches.[47] To the south of the church there are many rock-carved cisterns. The hills around ʿAyn Wardo have further interesting monuments suggestive of early settlements.

Another settlement, known locally as Serhevdana, to the south-west of Dēr Qubbe, was also abandoned at an early date and thus gives an idea as to the extent of a Late Antique or Early Islamic village (Fig. 3.2.2). The best-preserved building in the village is the Church of Yoldath Aloho. The apse-archivolt of the church (located towards the south of the settlement) has survived and it has the type of sculpture that we are inclined to date to the seventh to eighth centuries (Fig. 3.2.15, see also Fig. 4.1 for a comparative analysis of sculpture). Wiessner has recorded three churches in the village.[48] The fact that one of them had similar sculpture to that of the Church of the Yoldath Aloho may indicate that the settlement was a seventh- or eighth-century foundation, perhaps abandoned at an early date.

Another settlement that is revealing is located on a hilltop about 12.5 kilometres north-east of Nusaybin. The name of the settlement is not known, but a building known as Dayro d-Shumrin is located there. One can follow the traces of many buildings, streets, and courtyards. There are perimeter walls on the east, north, and north-west sides and the remaining sides are protected by the edge of the escarpment.[49] Also in Kundel and Serhevdana, one can see clusters of foundations indicating spaces gathered around small courtyards. However, it is difficult to determine the number of houses or the presence of a public plaza, inn, market, roads, public spaces, cemeteries, etc. in these settlements.[50]

The other villages in the region have been inhabited continually and have thus changed considerably. Ḥāḥ is historically the most important village of Ṭur ʿAbdin, as it was where the first bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin probably resided (Fig. 3.2.3 see also Fig. 3.1.3 for its relation with neighbouring monasteries). The largest village church of the whole region, namely the Church of Mor Sobo, is situated in this village and we can date parts of this church to the sixth century

[47] Its coordinates are N37 25.213 E41 26.502. Detailed research needs to be done on that settlement.

[48] The Church of Yoldath Aloho, Church of Mor Eshaya, and Der Qarnawala (Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/I, 239–44). When Wiessner recorded the site, a piece of sculpture and foundations of the Der Qarnawala were visible (Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/II, figs. 136 and 137).

[49] S. Blaylock, 'Monastery of Shumrin', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 163–6.

[50] In the villages of Limestone Massif, we can determine these functions. In Déhès, for example, fifty-four houses, a public plaza, a market with stoas, and an inn were identified. Tate, *Les Campagnes de la Syrie*, 213–26. Houses were private residences oriented towards agricultural production, as probably was the case also in Ṭur ʿAbdin.

Fig. 3.2.2 Aerial view of Serhevdana
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

(Fig. 3.2.4). It has been argued that this church was the cathedral of the bishopric of Turabdion.[51] From 614 to 1088, the bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin resided in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin. A separate bishop was consecrated briefly in the mid-eighth century, and he resided in or near Ḥāḥ.[52] Furthermore, the Chronicle of Zuqnin tells a story of a false prophet in Ḥāḥ who managed to attract groups of people to the village in 769/770.[53] Thus, in the eighth century, Ḥāḥ seems to have prospered again and continued to be an important village later. The

[51] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 113.
[52] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 31.
[53] Chronicle of Zuqnin, 249–52.

Fig. 3.2.3 Aerial View of Ḥāḥ with three churches marked
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

Fig. 3.2.4 The northern wall of the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, *beth slutho* in the foreground and the village in the background
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

high concentration of churches and monasteries in and around Ḥāḥ (hence the Turkish name Anıtlı, which means 'with monuments') must be a result of this importance. There are three monasteries on the outskirts of Ḥāḥ that can be dated to the eighth century. The most important church in the village in that period was probably the Church of Yoldath Aloho, which is outstanding in terms of its architecture and architectural sculpture. There are parts of the church, at the

foundation level, which point to a date contemporary with, or even earlier than, the Church of Mor Sobo. We shall deal with this church in Section 3.3.2, 'The Churches of the Monasteries', as its plan is related more closely to monastic type of church in the region. In addition to the churches and monasteries, there is a house-like structure that has survived at Ḥāḥ, possibly the only secular building surviving from the Late Antique Ṭur ʿAbdin.[54]

3.2.2 Village (Hall-type) Churches

There are around twenty-five churches of the hall type in the region that are all located in the villages.[55] The nine illustrated in Fig. 3.2.5 all exhibit parts datable to Late Antiquity; this selection is representative of the type in question. Two of them, Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus and Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, are dated by Bell to the Early Islamic period. All of these churches extend from east to west and are entered from the south. Bell suggested that the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, a sixth-century structure which went through extensive rebuilding over the centuries, was the prototype of the hall-type churches in the region. This church is much larger than the other hall-type churches in the region.[56] It was during its restoration that the piers, built of alternating layers of stone and brick, were added. They hide the fine sculpture of the capitals carrying the apse-archivolt and block parts of some of the doors and windows. The piers topped with arches carried a brick vault. The vault has collapsed, but parts of it are still visible in the nave of the church. Bell suggested that this church was originally covered by a timber roof, but later when the roof was turned into a barrel vault, piers were needed to reduce the span and carry the extra weight.[57] The barrel vault was covered by ceramic tiles, as is visible on the northern aisle.[58] They are probably laid on a timber frame. Besides the apse archivolt, there is decoration also on liturgical panels, now lying loose in

[54] For a plan, see Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 111.

[55] This number excludes the rock-carved examples. For all the plans of the hall-type churches reproduced together, see E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Geçmiş ve Şimdi Arasında Harput'taki Meryem Ana Kilisesi'nin Kültürel ve Fiziksel Biyografisi', *Ege Üniversitesi Sanat Tarihi Dergisi* 25/2 (2016): 193–212, fig. 11.

[56] It is 27.30 metres long and 11.10 metres wide (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 19, 112). The church that follows it in scale is the Church of Mor Philoxenos of Mabbugh (known as Mor Akhsnoyo) in Midyat (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 19, figs. 170–5). The latter is highly restored and it has no architectural sculpture; but the door frames are of an early date. Midyat is today considered the centre of Ṭur ʿAbdin.

[57] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 19. Ṭur ʿAbdin was once covered with mature forests. In the time of Septimius Severus enough timber was found in the forests near Nisibis for the transport fleet on the Euphrates which the Romans needed for the capture of Parthia: Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, vol. 2, p. 341, n. 2.

[58] Although the surviving tiles are of a later date, the church probably had similar tiles in Late Antiquity.

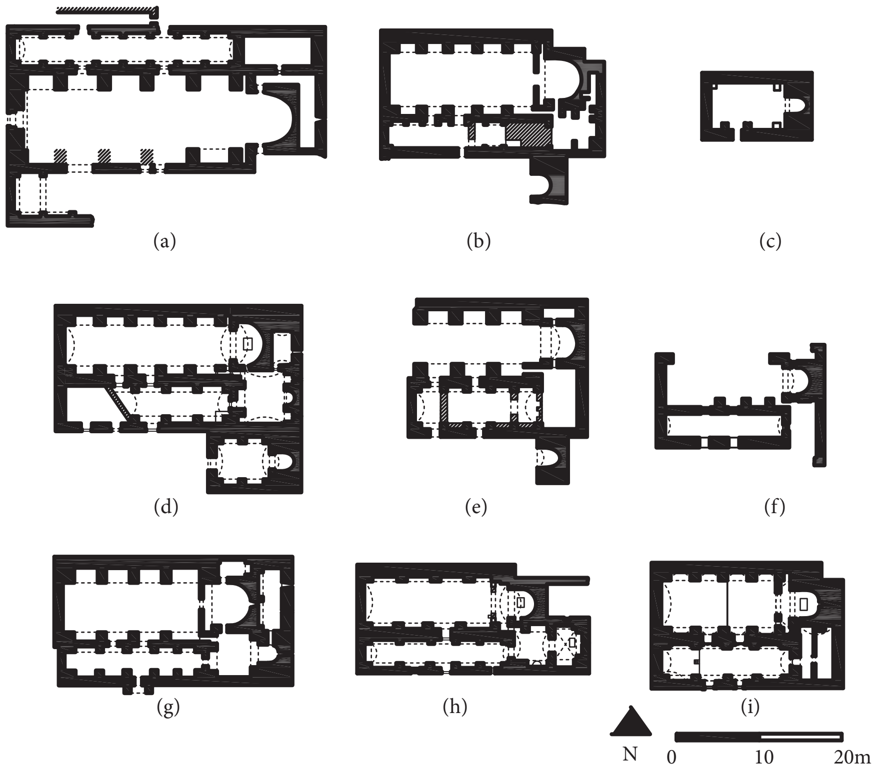

Fig. 3.2.5 Plans of some of the hall-type churches in the Ṭur ʿAbdin (a) Mor Sobo, Ḥāḥ; (b) Mor ʿAzozoʾel, Kfarze; (c) Yoldath Aloho, Serhevdana; (d) Mor Yuḥannon, Qelleth; (e) Mor Sobo, Arbay; (f) Yoldath Aloho, Dera/Dereköyü; (g) Mor Quryaqos, ʿUrdnus; (h) Mor Yaʿqub, Harabekefri; (i) Mor Simeon, Ḥabsenas
Source: By the author and S. Kayasü after Bell/Mundell Mango and Wiessner.

the ruins of the church.[59] These fragments are the only surviving evidence for the templon screens. The ones in Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus and Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, recorded by Bell, have disappeared.[60]

Some have (or had) a narthex flanking the nave on the south side. The narthex and the nave are connected by two doors for the different sexes, since the women sat with the small children in a fenced-off area at the west end of the church.[61] Until recently (at least in 2005), there was a wooden screen for separation in Mor

[59] They are similar to sixth-century decoration in Seih Sleiman in Syria. See Naccache, *Le décor des églises de villages*, CCLXXXVI.

[60] For an analysis of those two examples from Bell's photographs, see M. Szymaszek, 'The Lost Screens of the Churches of Mar Cyriacus in Arnas and Mar ʿAzaziel in Kefr Zeh (Tur ʿAbdin, Turkey)', *Eastern Christian Art* 9 (2013): 107–18.

[61] Like in churches in Syria. See T. Berger, *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 57.

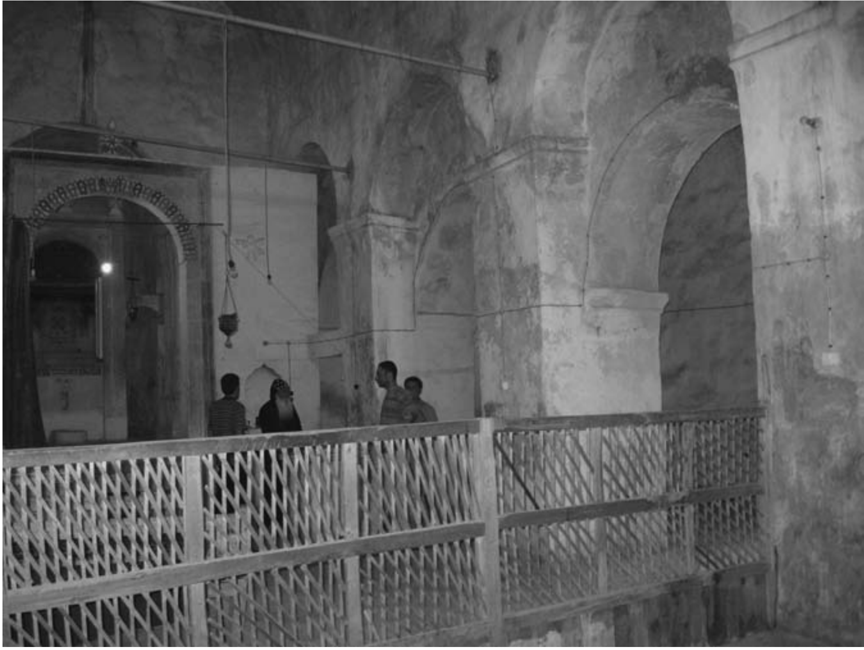

Fig. 3.2.6 Interior view of Mor Dimeṭ in Zaz, with the wooden barrier of the women's section in the foreground

Dimeṭ in Zaz (Fig. 3.2.6). In some of the churches, the two doors are away from each other in others, including Mor Sobo (Fig. 3.2.4, Fig. 3.2.5a) and the small church in Kundel,[62] these doors are adjacent to each other. The recent discovery of a bema and dividing walls in the church in Gola near Göktaş[63] may indicate that the hall-type churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin originally had such bema and dividing walls in their naos. However, no traces of those have survived. The only liturgical furniture that has survived in Ṭur ʿAbdin is a pulpit in the Church of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze (Fig. 3.2.7).

In Mor Sobo, there is an additional entrance from the west which led Monneret de Villard to suggest that it also has features which are not Mesopotamian. He, on the other hand, thinks the corridor behind the apse comes from the temple architecture of Mesopotamia.[64] In some churches, there is a chapel to the south of the apse. In the case of Mor Philoxenos in Midyat, Bell claimed that this chapel was the earliest part of the church.[65] Some have only a room attached to the apse on the south side. Others have a tiny room attached to the apse on the north side,

[62] S. Topaloğlu, 'Church of Kundel', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 119–20.
[63] See Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia'.
[64] Monneret de Villard, *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, 50.
[65] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 51.

Fig. 3.2.7 Pulpit in the Church of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze

as well. Only the Church of Mor Sobo has an ambulatory; but some churches have a narrow room just behind the apse. There is no consistent arrangement at the east end of the churches. The rooms flanking the apse may have been used as *prothesis* or *diakonikon*, but in some cases they were probably used as baptisteries or martyria. Regardless of whether they have rooms flanking the apse or not, all of the churches are rectangular on the outside. Most churches have a free-standing exedra in their courtyards, used as an outdoor oratory called *bēth ṣlutho*.

3.2.2.1 Engaged Arcades

All of the hall-type churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin have engaged arcades, composed of piers and arches, against their north and south walls (Fig. 3.2.8). Bell suggested that the Church of Mor Sobo served as a prototype, after it had received its engaged piers. As a result of continuous restorations in these churches, the originality and the date of the lateral arcades have been objects of dispute. Bell

Fig. 3.2.8 Interior view of the Church of Mor Yuḥannon in Qelleth

thought the piers were added to Mor Sobo when the original timber roof was replaced with a barrel vault, but she thought that the others were all built with their piers and their vaults. However, Mor Sobo is not the only church where the doorways, which are usually profiled, are not positioned centrally in relation to the piers of the arcades (see the Church Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, Fig. 3.2.9) or where piers obscure the architectural decoration of the carved apse-archivolt (see, for example, the Church of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus, Fig. 3.2.10). Both of these features suggest that such churches originally had timber roofs and that the arcades were added to support a heavy vault. The single hall churches in Norhut and Gola[66] do not have piers and the fact that these churches have not been

[66] For Norhut and Gola, see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2, 'Around Edessa' and Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia', respectively.

Fig. 3.2.9 Engaged arcade in the Church Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze

Fig. 3.2.10 Apse archivolt of the Church of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus

restored at all support the idea that the churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin may have looked like them in the first place.

Mundell Mango thinks that these arcades were originally introduced to reduce the span of the roof. The width of the naves of most of these churches varies between 8.5 metres and 9 metres. According to Mundell Mango, the span was reduced by the lateral arcades to 6 metres, which made it possible to use shorter wooden beams that were available locally and thus were cheaper. She suggests that the piers were later enlarged to carry the barrel vaults. However, such piers were also built in the smaller churches, for example in the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Serhevdana and in the church of Kundel. In these churches, large blocks were used in the windows, doors, quoins, and piers, whereas the rest is constructed of roughly coursed, smaller stones. The fact that some tiny examples of the type have piers is an indication that the arcades were an original part of their design to carry the roof.[67] In the Maskok valley there are remains of a building (not necessarily a church, though known as Dayro d-Maskok) where we have only the lateral arcades surviving, and these point to an early date.[68] In the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Dera Village (Dereköy),[69] the piers are well placed in relation to the doors, the pier at the east end does not block the apse, and there is a passageway to the east of the pier which leads to the side room of the apse. These show that in some instances the arcades seem to be carefully planned.

It is arguable, therefore, that there was, in Ṭur ʿAbdin, a tradition of building a village church with piers and arches, described as 'decorating the walls' by Monneret de Villard.[70] He links this tradition both to the temple architecture of the region and to the Sasanian palaces. This tradition can also be observed in the monastic churches that we shall discuss below. In the case of the most recent churches, there is no doubt that these arcades belong to the original building;[71] but there are older churches to which arcades were added later, or the existing arcades were enlarged. In the Church of Mor Sobo and in some other churches, which exhibit the same defects such as the partial blockage of sculpture and of windows and doors not equidistant from their flanking piers, the lateral piers were needed

[67] For example, the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Serhavdana. See Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/I, 239–44.

[68] S. Kayasü, 'Dayro d-Maskok', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 80–2.

[69] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/I, 68–75.

[70] Monneret de Villard, *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, 54. For the Sasanian connection, see the discussion on the so-called Church of St. George in Amida in Section 2.4.4.. Monneret de Villard points out that the same feature exists in the palace church of Ani, built in 622 (*Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, 71). See http://www.virtualani.org/citadel/palacechurch.htm for a plan and photographs.

[71] Most visible in Mor Gewargis in ʿArbay (Alayurt); see P. Aykaç, 'Mor Gewargis', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 137.

for structural stability. This need may have arisen because of earthquakes.[72] Similarly, fire may have destroyed the original timber roofs. The roofs may have been replaced by brick vaults because of the scarcity of long timber in later centuries. This required the walls to be strengthened; thus the piers and the vaults were probably built at the same time in some of the churches.

3.2.2.2 Masonry

In the Dera Village, the lower parts of the piers of the engaged arcade, the apse-archivolt, and all the door posts and lintels are of large well-squared blocks, whereas the arches on the piers and the main walls are composed of much smaller roughly squared blocks. The same can be said of the Church of Mor Barḥadbsabbo in ʿAyn Wardo, although in this case, the arches on the piers are also constructed of large ashlar blocks. In some other churches, the piers are made of extremely large blocks. In the Church of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus, large ashlar blocks were used both in the outer walls and in the piers. In the Church of Mor Yuḥannon in Qelleth, the southern arcade is made up of alternating bands of three courses of ashlar blocks and three layers of brick. The arches on the piers are also of brick. On the other hand, both the arches and the piers of the arcade adjoining the north wall are constructed almost completely of roughly squared small blocks with the occasional brick (Fig. 3.2.8). The chapel next to the apse has larger blocks. That is Koch's reason for dating this part very early.[73]

The church of Mor Yaʿqub in Kafro Taḥtoyto (Elbeğendi), that of Mor Malke near Ayn ʿWardo, and that of Mor Holo near Ṣālaḥ all display *opus mixtum* with a core of rubble and well-cut ashlar masonry on the interior and the exterior.[74] In fact many others are built like that but in those three examples we can see the section of the walls. Some churches are covered with plaster on the inside, making

[72] Keser-Kayaalp, 'Church Building in the Ṭur 'Abdin', 190–1. The Church of Mor Yaʿqub, added onto the fourth-century baptistery at Nisibis (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis'), is further evidence that piers and arcades were used in ecclesiastical architecture in the eighth century, as a notice in the *Opus Chronologicum* of Elijah of Nisibis dates this church to the year 758/759: see Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, vol. 2, p. 343. In Mor Yaʿqub, as in Mor Sobo, the large stone piers partially hide the doorways of the older baptistery on the south side and their finely sculpted relieving arches. The Chronicle of Zuqnin records a number of earthquakes in the eighth century. The one in 717/718 destroyed many churches 'particularly in (Beth) Maʿde'. This village is now identified as Gola, see Section 2.7.2. A strong earthquake dating to 712 is also recorded. The Old Church of Edessa was also destroyed in the same earthquake that 'left marks on even the [churches] that remained standing'. In 741/742 another 'powerful and violent earthquake' took place. The one in 747 was described in similar words. The last earthquake mentioned in the eighth century took place in 755/756 and again destroyed many places. It was probably more strongly felt further south in the Habur (Khabur) where three villages were destroyed (Chronicle of Zuqnin, 160, 197). See also Palmer et al., *The Seventh Century*, 46.

[73] As mentioned above, Bell similarly argued that the earliest part of the Church of Mor Philoxenos/ Akhsnoyo in Midyat was the chapel on the south side of the apse.

[74] For Mor Yaʿqub: Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/II, 105; for Mor Melke (by Z. Erdal) and Mor Holo (by J. Correia) in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 218 and 74 respectively.

it impossible to determine the type of masonry. In the church of Mor Sobo, we can follow different masonry types which were most probably contemporary (Fig. 3.2.4). The apse is made of larger and well-squared ashlar blocks, whereas the outer walls are built of small, semi-squared blocks, with larger ashlar blocks used at the quoins and in the doorways and the windows. In this case, the piers blocking the windows and the apse ornamentation are constructed of alternating layers of brick and of semi-squared small stones.

3.2.2.3 Brickwork

Brick vaulting was common in both village and monastic churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The way the bricks are laid in these vaults have been described as 'set in squares' by Bell.[75] Catherine Hof, on the other hand, comparing these vaults with sixth-century vaults in the cisterns of Resafa, uses the term mitre-pattern vaults. This technique is considered strong, cheap, and easy because it does not require scaffolding. In the technique, the span is divided into three by transverse arches in stone. The vaulting started from the ends of the vault and the transverse arch, and in the middle where the brick layers met, there was a square or wedge-shaped gap. Hof identified the vaults of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ (of those in the narthex [Fig. 3.3.14], nave [Fig. 3.3.13] and the secondary church of Mor Barṣawmo) and that of the nave of Mor Gabriel (and the large hall next to the Octagon) as vertical-brick vaulting. In this technique, the first laid bricks are full and not pitched. She considered the vault of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze (Fig. 3.2.11) as pitched-brick vaulting. Following the same classification, we can say that the vaults in the narthex of Mor Simeon at Ḥabsenas, the naos of Mor Dimeṭ at Zaz, and the naos of Mor Yuḥannon in Qelleth (not visible today because it was plastered later) are also pitched. Although their appearances in earlier churches may suggest that the vertical-brick technique is an earlier technique, the pitched-brick barrel vault technique has its origins in the much earlier mudbrick architecture of Northern Mesopotamia. In addition, the parallels with the sixth-century pitched-brick vaults of the Resafa cisterns indicate that in these regions the techniques overlapped.[76]

The vault of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub probably dates to the mid-eighth century, based on the eight Syriac inscriptions in this church, which Palmer dates to 752–755.[77] One of the two inscriptions that mention a restoration is located just under the vault. It records the names of people and how much money they gave to the monastery. The building technique of the vault is

[75] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 21.

[76] C. Hof, 'Late Antique Vaults in the Cisterns of Resafa with "Bricks Set in Squares"', in *Building Knowledge, Constructing Histories, Volume 2. Proceedings of the 6th International Congress on Construction History, July 9–13, 2018*, ed. I. Wouters et al. (Brussels: CRC Press, 2018), 755–63. I thank C. Hof for answering my questions.

[77] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', B1–B8.

Fig. 3.2.11 Vault and apse archivolt of the Church of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze

similar to Mor Gabriel's vault but what is different is the finishing of the vault in the centre and the decorative use of brick with bands in the herringbone pattern (diagonal bricks) and half-cylinder roof tiles (imbrices) (Fig. 3.2.17).[78] The decoration rather than the brick-laying technique may suggest a similar date for some of these vaults. Assuming that the dating of Mor Yaʿqub to the eighth century is correct, we can suggest that the vaults with similar decorative brickwork date to the same period.

The vault of the nave of Mor Simeon at Ḥabsenas is an exceptional example where the bricks are not laid in squares but pitched all along the east–west axis of the church. The segmented dome of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ has no real parallel. Its bricks are laid like leaf-shaped trusses joining at the top. In the triangular spaces between the lower parts the bricks are laid horizontally. The dating of it to the eighth century and my considering that it is an original part of the church is somewhat hypothetical.

3.2.2.4 Architectural Sculpture

The architectural sculpture of the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ differs from that of the other village churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The few parts of it that are still extant—around the archivolt and the niche of the apse—exhibit parallels with the

[78] For the decorative use of brick, see Fig. 3.2.17. The vaults of the churches of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus and Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, the vaults of the side chapel and the back room of Mor Yuḥannon in Qelleth, and the vault of the side chapel of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus have decorative brickwork. They are found also in monastic contexts like the so-called Dome of the Egyptians at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin and the narthex vault of Yoldat Aloho at Ḥāḥ.

Fig. 3.2.12 Decorated architectural fragments in the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ

sixth-century decoration found in the cities of the region and at the monasteries of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān near Mardin and Mor Daniel near Constanita.[79] We should also note that the apse-archivolt of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, which was originally an East Syrian monastery, had similar decoration of a highly classical character that can be dated to the sixth century. In the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, the sculpture of the archivolt is too badly eroded to allow a clear photograph.[80] The loose fragments of liturgical furnishing in the church show that these, too, were highly decorated (Fig. 3.2.12).

Most of the rest of the hall-type churches lack architectural sculpture. In some, it has evidently been destroyed, as fragments have been preserved here and there. Elaborate sculpture dating to the Late Antique period remains only in the apse-archivolts of the churches of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus (Fig. 3.2.10), Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, Mor Yuḥannon at Qelleth, the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Serhevdana (Fig. 3.2.15), and until recently in the narthex and *bēth ṣlutho* of Mor Sobo at ʿArbay.[81] The Church of Mor Simeon at Ḥabsenas has somewhat more abstract,

[79] See Section 3.3.2.3 for the former and Wiessner, *Nordmesopotamische Ruinenstätten*, fig. 7 for the latter.

[80] See the two photographs of the north side of the apse of Mor Sobo, taken in May 1909, in the Gertrude Bell archive. http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/, nos N_013 and N_016, though already by that time erosion had destroyed the fine detail.

[81] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II/II: 64–5.

Fig. 3.2.13 Architectural sculpture in the Church of Mor Samuel at Ḥāḥ

but still similar decoration.[82] In the tiny chapel of Mor Samuel, just north-west of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, we find similar sculpture reused in the frame of the entrance to the sanctuary (Fig. 3.2.13).[83]

Their architectural sculpture is both innovative and conservative. It can be described as a stylized version of the sixth-century sculpture in Ṭur ʿAbdin, which is highly classical in character.[84] The style of this sculpture is, in general, cruder, flatter, and more abstract[85] than the earlier tradition in the region that we find in the nearby cities of Dara, Amida, and Edessa, and in the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ. The vine scrolls, the split palmettes, and the bead-and-reel bands, which were common in Northern Mesopotamia in the sixth century, continue to appear,

[82] Bell recorded that the sculpture of this church was so crudely executed that it was 'obviously a later attempt to carry out the old traditional decoration' (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 53).

[83] Although built in a transverse-hall type plan, its location, small size, and poor-quality masonry suggests it was not a monastery but a later chapel that made use of spolia from an eighth-century building.

[84] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical tradition', 115–48.

[85] Ousterhout preferred to call this style 'bands of desiccated classical motifs'; Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 280.

though are much transformed. On the other hand, some classical band types, such as the egg-and-leaf, seem to have disappeared from the decorative repertoire completely. The flutes, common in the sixth century, became rare. However, new decorations such as plaiting, flower-like motifs, interlaced circles, petals and two rows of dentils were introduced (Fig. 3.2.14 and Fig. 3.2.15). Similar decoration is also found in some monastic churches, as will be seen below, in Section 3.3.2, 'Monasteries'.

Fig. 3.2.14 Detail from the apse archivolt of the Church of Mor Yuḥannon at Qelleth

Fig. 3.2.15 Detail from the sculpture on the apse archivolt of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Serhevdana

The resemblances between the latter types of Syriac church-sculpture and early Islamic architectural decoration help to date it to the eighth century. The winged palmette ornaments that can be seen in the archivolt of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus and on the doorway of the monastic church of Mary Magdalen at Ḥāḥ have been compared with examples in the palaces of Mshatta and al-Tuba, both in modern-day Jordan, and both built around 743/4.[86] The plaiting that exists in some of the churches has also been likened to those at ʿAnjar in Lebanon, built in 714/15. Plaiting exists also in some seventh-century Armenian churches, for example in Atʿeni.[87] The geometrization of vegetal motifs that can be seen in these churches was also an Umayyad phenomenon, best illustrated in the woodwork of the al-Aqṣa mosque in Jerusalem, rebuilt in 754 after an earthquake.[88] We find a large variety in the eighth-century sculpture in Ṭur ʿAbdin, where one can hardly find two churches with identical ornamental bands.

Apart from its similarities with early Islamic architectural decoration, textual and epigraphic evidence confirms the date of this sculptural style. We have a *terminus ante quem* for the extensively rebuilt Church of Mor Simeon of the Olives and its sculpture as the *Life* of Simeon says that Simeon (d.734) completed the church 'with every sort of good and fair ornament'.[89] Another piece of evidence for the dating is the templon-screen of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus, which is no longer extant, except in Bell's photograph. The Syriac inscription next to the screen, edited from Bell's photograph by Palmer, recorded its construction in the Seleucid year 1072, AD 761/2.[90]

An ornamental feature of the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin, which is relatively rare elsewhere, is the large cross in the conch of the apse in several churches and *bēth ṣlawotho* (outdoor oratories).[91] The crosses in Ṭur ʿAbdin are about 1.5 metres high, are all concave, and vary in articulation (Fig. 3.2.16). For example, some have

[86] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical tradition', 127.

[87] For ʿAnjar, Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 127; for Armenian churches: P. Donabèdian and J. M. Thierry, *Les arts arméniens* (Paris: Mazenod, 1987), fig. 25; and also fig. 6 in http://www.virtualani.org/citadel/palacechurch.htm.

[88] R. Hillenbrand, 'Umayyad Woodwork in the Aqsa Mosque', in *Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. Jeremy Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 271–310.

[89] Life of Simeon of Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §44. See the discussion in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis', regarding the reliability of this source. It has been argued that the reports on his building activities in Ṭur ʿAbdin are probably correct.

[90] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', C2.

[91] Mundell, 'Monophysite Church Decoration', 58–74, 66, n. 79. Mundell lists the crosses in a few churches in Thrace at Vize, in Lycia at Karabel (which are flat) and in Cappadocia at Çavuşin, and also in Eskigümüş monastery (eleventh century) in Cappodocia, where one can find a carved Latin cross in high relief. One was also discovered in a rock-cut monastic church in Basamaklı Mağara close to Doliche (to the west of the Euphrates). A. Schütte-Maischatz and E. Winter, *Doliche: Eine kommagenische Stadt und ihre Götter* (Bonn: Dr Rudolph Habelt, 2004), 44, Abb. 4. This last, which is also geographically the closest to Ṭur ʿAbdin, is dated between 600 and 1100 and constitutes the only real parallel to the apsidal conch-crosses of that region, which are here dated to the same period. Painted or mosaic crosses in apsidal conches are common elsewhere in the Empire: St. Irene's church at Constantinople and Sant' Apollinare in Classe may be singled out as examples dating from the sixth century.

Fig. 3.2.16 Cross in the apse conch of the Church of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze

medallions around the intersection point of the two arms, one has a bird, another has a boss on top of the cross (Fig. 3.2.17). Most have bulbous terminations to their arms. While some have a stepped termination at the base of the cross, others have a rectangular boss. The fact that structures with the above-mentioned style of sculpture also have crosses in their apse conches suggests that they were contemporary. Three possibly sixth-century crosses survive in Northern Mesopotamia. Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ had a cross, of which only a fragment now survives. The other two are in Akkese near Constantia and the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar.[92] Crosses in apse-conches seem to have been especially common in the eighth century, when they also become more decorated.[93]

[92] For the Akkese cross, see Keser-Kayaalp, 'A newly discovered rock-cut complex', fig. 16. This cross is dated in accordance with the dating of the rest of the complex. It is plainer than the crosses in Ṭur ʿAbdin. For the church of the Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, see Mundell Mango, 'Deux églises', 60. The reason for dating this cross to the sixth century is because, as in the Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, the sculpture on the apse archivolt seems earlier. Today, the cross that used to be in the apse of the Church of Mar Abraham of Kashkar has been removed from its place and its fragments have been randomly reused in different parts of the apse-walls. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3, 'Around Nisibis'.

[93] The use of the cross in decorating sanctuaries, together with the aniconic nature of the architectural sculpture in most of these churches, recalls the iconoclastic movement that gained momentum in Constantinople from the 720s; but see L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c.680–850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), e.g. 140–3, where the traditional narrative concerning iconoclasm and the cross is questioned. It is hard to ascertain whether crosses in the apses of the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin are related to Byzantine Iconoclasm, as most of the sixth-century wall and floor mosaics of the region were also void of icons, although this view is challenged by the recent finds in Gola (see Section 2.7.2). This general tendency may have originated in the local traditions of the region (Mundell, 'Monophysite Church Decoration'). It should be noted that there is no textual reference for the ban of icons: Brock, 'Iconoclasm and the Monophysites'. For drawings of

Fig. 3.2.17 Side chapel of the Church of Mor Yuḥannon at Qelleth

The door frames of these churches, like those of the monastic churches, though to a lesser extent, have profiled mouldings similar to those of the churches in the Limestone Massif of north-west Syria. The doorway of the monastic Church of Mary Magdalen at Ḥāḥ has a vine scroll and an inscription. Despite the rebuilding, in many cases one can follow the traces of earlier constructions, the cyma-cornices at the edges of the roofs and some figural decoration on the façades, such as the lions on the west façade of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze (Fig. 3.2.18).

3.2.2.5 Bēth ṣlutho

The *bēth ṣlutho*, meaning 'house of prayer' in Syriac, is an architectural feature which is found only in the village churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin, with the single exception of that in the Monastery of the Cross of Beth El (Dayro da-Ṣlibo).[94] A *bēth ṣlutho* is a free-standing exedra (the word preferred by Bell) built adjacent

the crosses in the apses of Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus and Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze and in the *bēth ṣlawotho* of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ and of Mor Dodho at Bēth Sbirina, see Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, fig. 53.

[94] A niche in Mar Behnam in Iraq has been identified as a *bēth ṣlutho* but it has little in common with those in Ṭur ʿAbdin. It is more like an Islamic mihrab in terms of decoration and scale and is located in the western gallery between the two doors giving access to the church (see B. Snelders, *Identity and Christian–Muslim Interaction: Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 283–4, pl. 48).

Fig. 3.2.18 West façade of the Church of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze

to the east end of a parish church, where it was used as an outdoor oratory (Fig. 3.2.19). *Bēth ṣlawotho* are built of ashlar masonry and inscribed in a square, open at the west side, allowing large gatherings in front of them. They are sometimes adorned with decoration, sometimes including a cross in the conch. They usually have stone tables in front of them to hold liturgical books or other liturgical objects and evidently served as a focus for prayers led by a priest or a deacon. The epitaphs engraved on the conches of some of these free-standing apses suggest that funeral services were conducted there. The now ruined *bēth ṣlutho* of Mor Addai at Heshterek had twenty-two epitaphs; that of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ has seven; and that of Mor Dodho at Bēth Severina, two.[95] Given that they are well lit, sheltered and accessible to all, these oratories are also good places for such memorials.

The *bēth ṣlutho* of the Church of Mor Addai at Heshterek, which no longer survives, was securely dated by an inscription to 771/2.[96] The *bēth ṣlutho* of Mor Dodho at Bēth Severina is dated either 794/5 or (less probably) 734/5.[97] Based on their masonry and sculptural features, *bēth ṣlawotho* of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ, Dayro da-Ṣlibo, Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus, Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, and Mor Dimeṭ at Zaz can be dated to the same period by analogy. Those in Kafarbe, Maʿarre, and Beth Maʿnem are later. Mor Sobo has the largest *bēth ṣlutho*, measuring 4.5 metres in width and height and 3 metres in depth. The others are constructed in a notional cube measuring between 2 metres and 3 metres.

[95] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 136, 211.
[96] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', A5.
[97] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', C3.

Fig. 3.2.19 *Bēth ṣlutho* at the Church of Mor Dodho at Bēth Sbirina

3.2.2.6 Rebuilding and Dating

Most of the churches in the villages have gone through several rebuilding phases over the centuries. The first wave of this process might have been as early as the eighth century. Palmer assumes that all village churches were built on 'pre-Arab buildings', and argues that new monasteries were built, but not new churches.[98] Guntram Koch argues for a different scenario in the evolution of the village churches. He thinks that in the first phase, which he dates to the late fourth and fifth centuries, there were small churches that were later vaulted. Koch associates this phase with the side-chapels. In the second phase (dated to the eighth century), he argues that the hall-type churches now standing were built with timber roofs. According to Koch, in the third phase (probably the twelfth century), the pilasters were added and the roofs were altered to brick vaults.[99] Given that no church in Ṭur ʿAbdin has been excavated and there have been extensive repairs in the churches, this hypothesis cannot be proved. However, considering the whole of Northern Mesopotamia, their dating to the fourth or fifth centuries seems unlikely.

Bell was the first to suggest a date after the Islamic conquest for two of the hall-type churches of the Ṭur ʿAbdin, namely the Churches of Mor Quryaqos at

[98] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 186.

[99] G. Koch, 'Probleme des nordmesopotamischen Kirchenbauen. Die Längstonnenkirchen im Ṭūr ʿAbdīn', in *Studien zur spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst und Kultur des Orients*, ed. G. Koch, Band 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), 117–35.

ʿUrdnus, and Mor ʿAzozo'el at Kfarze; and also the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ, which is not a hall-type church. Following the above discussion, and proposing dates based on inscriptions, textual material, architectural decoration in the apse-archivolt and apse cornice, the existence of *bēth ṣlawotho*, crosses in the apse conches, and brickwork, we can tell that many of the village churches were built or extensively rebuilt in the eighth century.[100] We can suggest a similar dating for the village churches of Mor Yuḥannon in Qelleth, Mor Simeon at Ḥabsenas, Yoldath Aloho in Serhevdana, Mor Addai at Heshterek, Mor Stephen at Kfarbe, Mor Dodho at Bēth Severina, Mor Sobo at ʿArbay, Mor Quryakos at Anhel, the church in Dera (known as Cami Kilise in Dera) and possibly Mor Dimeṭ in Zaz.[101] However, we should not rule out the possibility that some might have had sixth-century foundations, some might have even utilized earlier Roman buildings, and some might have been built from scratch.[102]

3.3 Monasteries

According to later legend, Mar Awgin, a fourth-century saint from Egypt, was the initiator of the monastic life in Mesopotamia and Syria, suggesting a link with Egyptian monasticism. However, most of the sources for Mar Awgin's life were written no earlier than the late ninth century and are unreliable. In addition to that, there is no need to look for Egyptian origins, as there was, according to Brock, a 'remarkable native ascetic tradition' in Syria and Mesopotamia.[103] The tradition based on the Life of Mar Awgin[104] attributes the foundation of some of the monasteries in the region to the fourth century. Mor Gabriel, which is claimed to have been founded in 397, is one of them. However, it was the sixth century, above all, that saw a great expansion of the monasteries in Northern Mesopotamia. It was the middle of the sixth century that John of Ephesus wrote his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, which was concerned with the Roman province of Mesopotamia. At the very same time, on the south side of Mount Izlo in the Persian Empire, Mar Abraham of Kashkar was reforming East Syrian monasticism.[105] Given the special conditions in

[100] For earlier lists based on each category, see E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Church Building in Ṭur ʿAbdin'. Some new churches are added here.

[101] Mor Dimeṭ in Zaz has an inscription from the tenth century but masonry at some parts point to an earlier foundation.

[102] The remarkably large ashlar blocks (about 2 metres wide) in the base courses of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ and in the south wall of the church of the Monastery of Mor Loʿozor at Ḥabsenas may especially point to this phenomenon. Detailed research of the Hellenistic and Roman periods needs to be done. The tower tomb at Fafi, which Bell has recorded, is the only evidence we have from that period (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 28, 29, pls. 108–12).

[103] S. Brock, 'Early Syrian Asceticism', *Numen* 20/1 (1973): 1–19, 3.

[104] His *Life* borrows much from earlier texts, especially the *Life* of Abraham of Kashkar. See the section on Mount Izlo in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3.

[105] F. Jullien, *Le monachisme en Perse. La réforme d'Abraham le Grand, père des moines de l'Orient* (Louvain: Peeters, 2008). For his monastery, see Chapter 2, Fig. 2.2.9.

Roman Mesopotamia, where the miaphysites formed a persecuted group, the monasteries of the region gained a political, social, cultural, and religious significance. Moreover, some of them became the seats of bishops. Although we have mentioned monasteries in the vicinity of cities, we do not know the location of many of those mentioned in the sources, and with a few exceptions, we do not know what they looked like.[106] However, in Ṭur ʿAbdin we have strong architectural evidence.[107]

In a recent article, Palmer gives a catalogue of the monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin, dividing the region into thirteen parts. He includes monasteries mentioned in texts and locates them on the map as closely as possible. He lists sixty-eight monasteries, sixteen hermitages, and seven churches where monks or nuns have resided.[108] The monasteries of which remains are extant are around fifty in number and they date to various periods. Palmer's chronological scope is wide, encompassing everything from the fourth to the twentieth century. Here, the focus is on the most significant monasteries, which fall within the chronological limits of this book. They are selected for their distinctive features. Noteworthy buildings, which can be dated with certainty to the period before the Arab conquest, are found in eight monasteries, six of which (marked with an asterisk in the Table below) are still functioning today and have been much restored in the last twenty years.

Monastery	**Buildings dating before the Arab conquest**
Mor Abai, Qelleth (Dereiçi)	Church
Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, Mardin*	Two churches, *bēth qadishe*, crypt
Mor Abrohom, Midyat*	Two churches
Mor Yaʿqub, Ṣālaḥ (Barıştepe)*	Two churches, recently excavated structures to the north of the main church
Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone, Derikfan (Nurlu)	Two churches
Dayro da-Ṣlibo*	Church, storage rooms, *bēth qadishe*
Mor Malke*	Church, storage rooms, *bēth qadishe*
Mor Gabriel, Qartmin (Yayvantepe)*	Church, the Octagon, storage rooms, *bēth qadishe*, secondary church
Mor Aho (Der Pu'e)	Church, burial chamber

[106] After dealing with the cities, we have included sections about the monuments around them, and have identified some of the remains with the names known to us through texts. Apart from those mentioned under the titles of the cities above, Procopius records the emperor Justinian's restorations of monasteries in Mesopotamia, namely the Monastery of St. John, the monasteries of Delphracis, Zebinus, Theodotus, John, Sarmathe, Cyrenus, and Begadaeus (Procopius, *On Buildings*, 5.9.31). These monasteries cannot be identified with any of the surviving monasteries in the region, and we do not know anything about their locations.

[107] Nevertheless, the monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin are not usually included in general discussions on monasteries. One reason is that they are not situated in either Syria or Anatolia, two of the regions on which such studies are focused. Another is that they have undergone extensive changes over the centuries, so that it is often assumed that most of the evidence has been destroyed or obscured, as has been stated in D. Hull, 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis', 363.

[108] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères'.

Fig. 3.3.1 Aerial view of the Monastery of Mor Abai at Qelleth
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

The Monastery of Mor Abai at Qelleth, which was probably abandoned in the medieval period, has a sixth-century church. Since it was not restored like the others in past centuries, its layout may give us a more accurate picture, relatively speaking, of the extent of a late antique monastery, although the inscriptions in the monastery point to extensive rebuilding in the thirteenth century (Fig. 3.3.1).[109]

Between 1293 and 1932 Dayr al-Zaʿfarān was the seat of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch. Today it is the seat of the bishopric of Mardin. Two of the churches, the *bēth qadishe* and the crypt under the *bēth qadishe*, date to the Late Antique period.[110] The monastery is laid out compactly around an open courtyard. Most of the buildings around the courtyard are late, but the positions of the late antique structures suggest they looked on a similar courtyard, as can be seen from the plan (Fig. 3.3.2). Over the centuries, the complex has expanded towards the south. Recently a centre for visitors has been built outside the main buildings to the south-west.

After the Arab conquest, small monasteries proliferated, such as Mor Loʿozor at Ḥabsenas (which probably had an earlier phase) (Fig. 3.1.2), Mor Yuḥannon and Mort Maryam Magdloyto (Mary Magdalen, also known as Dayr Ḥabis)

[109] B. Pekol, 'Mor Abai Monastery', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 14–18.

[110] This crypt is called a sun-temple by the inhabitants of the monastery. It is notable for the construction technique of its ceiling. This might be termed a horizontal vault, made with accurately shaped wedges of stone that support each other without any mortar between them. This crypt exhibits neither *arcosolia* nor any other trace of a burial. This arrangement, namely an oblong chapel with a crypt under a monastic church, can be found also in late antique Syria, for example, in Burdj Hedar. See H. C. Butler, *Syria: Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909* (Leyden: Brill, 1919), 292.

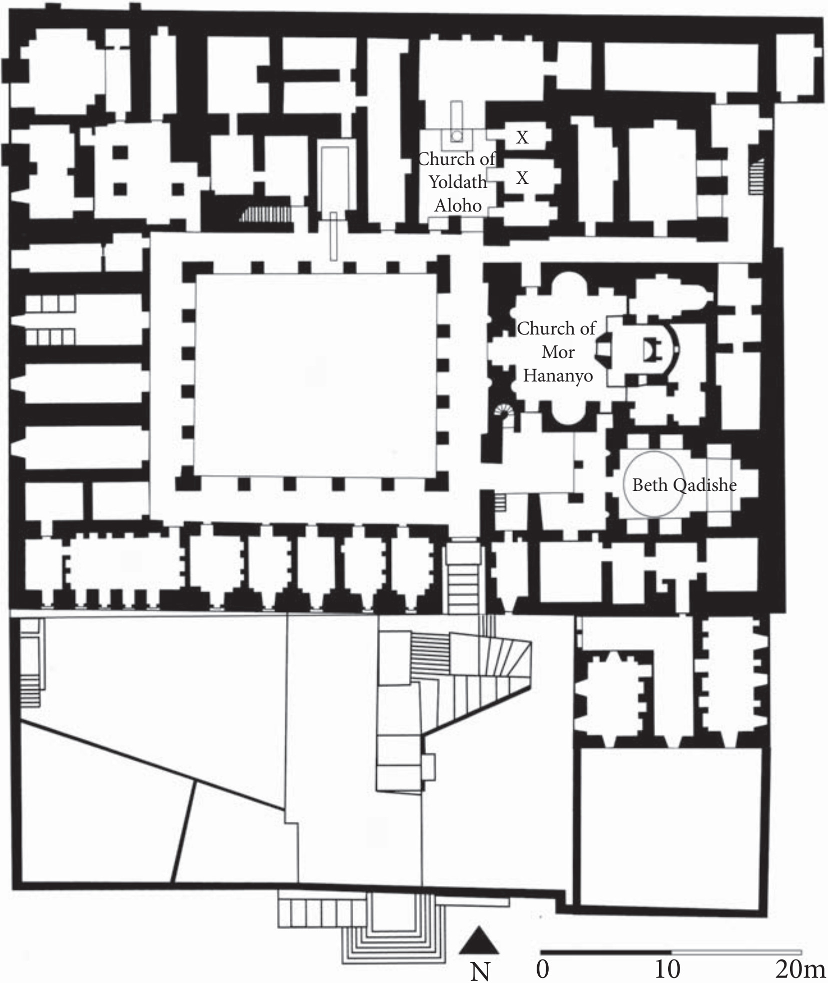

Fig. 3.3.2 Plan of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān
Source: By author after Hollerweger.

(Fig. 3.1.3) at Ḥāḥ, and Mor Sergius and Bacchus at Bēth Qusṭān. Of the older monasteries, many have undergone such extensive change that it is hard to say how they looked in Late Antiquity.[111] There are others which were abandoned at

[111] The Monastery of Mor Aḥo (Der Pu'e), which stands on a height visible from Bēth Manʿem, which lies to the north, has profiled arches and large ashlar blocks that point to a Late Antique date. The unpublished Life of Mor Aḥo in Vatican MS Syriac 37 records the construction of a burial vault and a charnel-house of hewn stone, thanks to a donation made by a certain Demetrius, the commander of the Roman garrison at the nearby fort, now called Hatem Tai Kalesi (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 54). For photographs of this monastery, see M. Dinler, 'Monastery of Mor Aho, Der Pue', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 102–4.

Fig. 3.3.3 Aerial view of the Monastery of Mor Aho at Defne
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

an early date and so retain traces of their extent, although there is not yet sufficient evidence to date them, for example the Monastery of Mor Aḥo in Defne (Fig. 3.3.3),[112] and the Monastery of Mor Shemʿun in Rowen (Karalar)[113] (Fig. 3.3.4). These give us an idea of the extent of a Ṭur ʿAbdin monastery in the medieval period. At Mor Gabriel, there is evidence of further building activities after the Arab conquest.[114] In Fig. 3.3.5, we see that the structures that point to a late antique date are above the line that has been drawn on the plan.[115]

The soft limestone of Ṭur ʿAbdin and the natural caves in the hills enabled the construction of many rock-carved monasteries.[116] The monasteries in the Ḥazro Mountain to the north of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, some of which were probably founded

[112] M. Cassis, 'Monastery of Mor Aho', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 36–9. Wiessner records the monastery as Dēr el-Muhr (Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, I/1, 110–15).

[113] B. Pekol and T. Katrakazis, 'Monastery of Mor Shemʿun (Der Bazizke)', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 159–62. Also see Bell/ Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 141 and Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, II, 154–60.

[114] In the early eighth century, the building of a portico is recorded by an inscription, as is a wine press in 784/785 (Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', C1 and A8, respectively). Based on its brickwork, the Dome of the Egyptians can probably be dated also to the eighth century.

[115] The part above the line was approximately the part that Bell drew when she documented the monastery. See Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, fig. 19.

[116] See E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Monastery of Mor Barṣawmo in Ṭur ʿAbdin: Artistic Continuities and Encounters', in *Discipuli dona ferentes: Glimpses of Byzantium in Honour of Marlia Mundell Mango*, ed. Tassos Papacostas and Maria Parani (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 261–91, for an example that received impressive decoration in the late fifteenth/early sixteenth centuries.

Fig. 3.3.4 Aerial view of the Monastery of Mor Shemʿun in Karalar
Source: Courtesy of KMKD.

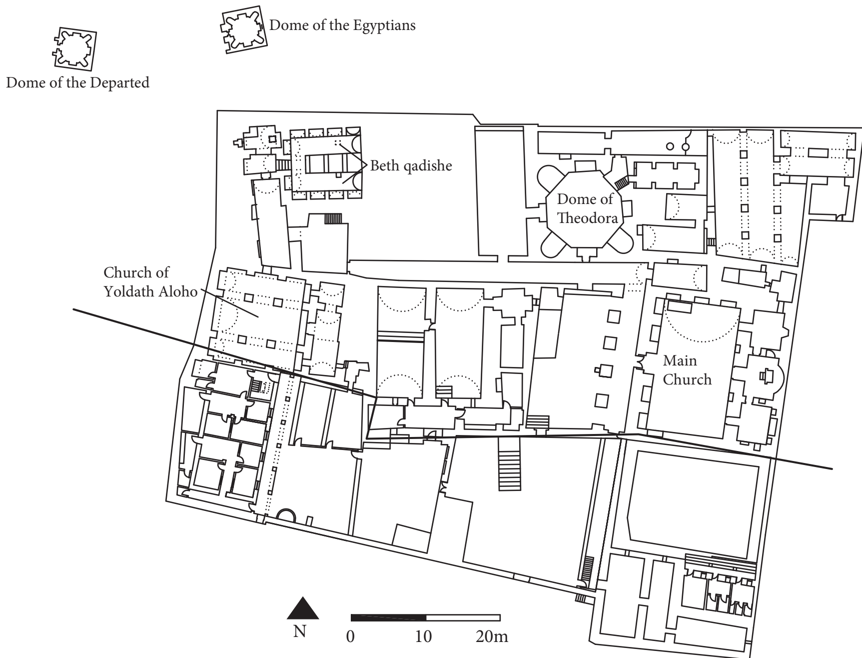

Fig. 3.3.5 Plan of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel
Source: By the author after the plan of architects A. İletmiş and S.İletmiş.

in Late Antiquity, have also been occupied and changed over the centuries.[117] Another region prominent for its rock-cut monasteries is Mount Izlo, discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3, 'Around Nisibis'. Detailed research on the spatial features of the rock-carved monasteries of the region remains to be done. It is the built, rather than the rock-cut, monasteries that feature in this book.

3.3.1 Architectural Features

Studies on the monasteries of the Limestone Massif of Syria have shown that one can identify spaces in the monasteries with certain functions: prayer and contemplation (this can include the columns of stylites and other type of towers, cells, etc.), communal worship, baptism, the consumption of food, the veneration of relics, and domestic activity. There is also evidence for subsistence and production, such as presses, cisterns, querns, and storage places.[118] However, not all monasteries have all of these spaces, or if they had, they have not survived. Based on the *Lives of Eastern Saints* of John of Ephesus, composed around 566, Palmer pictures a Northern Mesopotamian monastery in the sixth century: 'Characteristic was the enclosure with its single gate. Outside was a martyrium; inside, an oratory, a refectory, a kitchen, common latrines, barn-like chambers, and individual cells. Some of these cells were constructed inside the large chambers. The oratory contained an altar and a vestry. If there were other buildings typical of a monastery in his time, John does not mention them. Kitchen gardens and orchards surrounded the complex.'[119]

Some of the main monasteries active today in Ṭur ʿAbdin have been extensively rebuilt. But all of those listed above have at least one structure dating to the late antique period. Although it is not possible to give an account of all the monasteries in detail, we shall mention some of the individual monasteries and their late antique structures under the headings of various architectural features.

3.3.1.1 Monastic Walls and Sizes of the Monasteries

Having an outer enclosure wall seems to be one of the basic design principles of monasteries in general.[120] It has been argued that the walls were architectural

[117] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères', 186–90. For the architecture of two of them, see Dinler, M. 'Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub of Sarugh', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in Tur ʿAbdin*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 91–4 and B. Altan, 'Monastery of the Virgin Mary', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 95–9.

[118] D. Hull, 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis', 89–113. The issue of what constitutes a monastery has been a popular question in the scholarship, especially after the redefinition of some of the rock-cut buildings in Cappadocia as elite houses rather than monasteries (for a summary of the literature on the subject, see P. Niewöhner, 'Monasteries', n. 42).

[119] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 81.

[120] See for the Italian context: H. Dey, 'Building Worlds Apart: Walls and the Construction of Communal Monasticism from Augustine through Benedict', *Antiquité Tardive 12* (2004): 357–71. For the walls of the monasteries in Egypt, see P. Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 307–15.

representations of a new type of coenobitic life. The spiritual protection of the monks was the main motivation. In the case of Northern Mesopotamia, the outside threats have been more serious over the centuries. Although the walls we see now in Northern Mesopotamia are later, we find monastic walls mentioned in the texts.[121] The walls of the great monasteries might enclose land used for the cultivation, then as now, of the vine and the olive; in the smaller monasteries, they define the living quarters (Figs. 3.3.1–5).

The sizes of the monasteries changed over the centuries; however, the aerial photographs of medieval monasteries may give an idea about the sizes of Late Antique monasteries. In the Monastery of Mor Abai at Qelleth, the size of the church is about one-third of the whole complex, which is around 35 metres to 50 metres. The outer walls of Mor Aho at Defne are around 30 metres to 40 metres. Mor Shemʿun in Karalar has a trapezoid shape which is around 55 metres in length and its width changes from 30 metres to 40 metres. The monastery of Mor Loʿozor is a square of around 20 metres in side length. The monastery of Mor Yuḥannon at Ḥāḥ is a tiny monastery which is only twice the size of its church. The monasteries that are active today, are growing larger. We do not mention their sizes here as they do not tell much about their situation in the Late Antique period.

3.3.1.2 Towers for Watching or Recluses

The most significant tower in the region, a three-storied structure with a square plan, is found at Mor Gabriel Monastery. It is 5 metres to 6 metres in plan and has a height of about 9 metres.[122] It could have been a recluse's tower; alternatively, or perhaps additionally, it could have been used as a watchtower, since it has a good command of its surroundings and was close to the Byzantine–Persian frontier. Indeed, it has been suggested that Mor Gabriel Monastery was the fortification called Banasimeon, which was rebuilt by the emperor Justinian.[123] Since the tower has been extensively rebuilt, it is difficult to date. A similar tower exists at Ḥāḥ,

[121] In the so-called canons of Maruta and rules of Rabbula. See A. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm: The Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1960), 40, 133.

[122] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, fig. 36. These dimensions are very close to similar recluse towers in Northern Syria; such as Borj el-Mou'allaq (6 metres by 5.65 metres); Borj Mahdoum (5.5 metres by 5.5 metres) (I. Peña et al., *Les cénobites syriens* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1983), 104 and 108. The tower is similar to the tower in Deir Déhès near Antioch, which is also in a monastic context. The two have almost the same width and length. For the Déhès tower, it has been argued that it was not suitable for recluses, although it certainly could have been inhabited by regular monks: J. L. Biscop, with the collaboration of D. Orssaud and M. Mundell Mango, *Deir Déhès, Monastère d'Antochène, Etude Architecturale* (Beyrouth: Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 31. In the tower of Mor Gabriel Monastery, there are windows at all levels. After its restoration (in 2006), the structure looks like a completely different building.

[123] Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie orientale et pays adjacents*. For Banasymeon, see Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.4.14. The only reason for this identification is that the former name of the monastery was Mor Symeon, after the younger of the two founders. The monks, Dillemann supposes, might have been called 'sons of Symeon' (Syriac: *bnay Shemʿun*), hence 'Banasymeon'.

about 30 metres from the church of the Monastery of Mary Magdalen. It has medieval masonry, a square plan (5.5 metres), and is multi-storied. It was most likely used as a recluse's tower.[124]

Regarding other towers in monasteries, one should mention stylitism, which was initiated by Simeon the Elder in the fifth century in Syria and quickly spread to other parts of the Empire, including Northern Mesopotamia. There are twenty-seven stylites recorded in Northern Mesopotamia (nine in the province of Osrhoene and eighteen in the province of Mesopotamia), some of which date after the eighth century.[125] Some monasteries, such as the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin, had a long tradition of stylitism. Ten stylites are listed in the *Book of Life* of this monastery.[126] There is archaeological evidence for only two stylite columns in Northern Mesopotamia: the column in the Monastery of Mor Loʿozor near Ḥabsenas and the column in Dayr Stūne (Dayro d-estuneh) near Nisibis. The latter is difficult to date and in fact its function is not certain. It is square, with sides measuring 1.70 metres at the bottom; 6.5 metres to 7 metres high; and built of irregular stones.[127] The column of Mor Loʿozor requires further attention as it is a unique example of a masonry stylite's tower, and also because it was built in the eighth century, when the region was under Arab rule.

In the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, we are told that Simeon was himself a stylite in the Monastery of the Column near Nisibis. Simeon brought the relics of Mor Loʿozor from Harran and built a monastery and 'a column for recluses' in this monastery. A tower actually survives in the middle of the monastery and has an inscription dating its construction to 791/2 (Fig. 3.1.2).[128] In the inscription, the word *esṭuno* 'column' is used to describe the structure. But Simeon died in 734,

[124] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, pl. 149.

[125] Lukas Schachner updated the list of the stylites (A. L. Schachner, 'The Archaeology of the Stylite', in *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. D. Gwynn and S. Bangert (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 329–97). The stylites in Mesopotamia listed by him are Thomas near Tella (eighth century), Mor Loʿozor near Harran; Theodosius (ninth century) near Edessa; Thomas (early tenth century) near Edessa; John (tenth century) near Sarug; Cosmas (tenth century) near Sarug; Theodoulos (fourth century) near Edessa; Symeon and Thomas of Dara near Callinicum and an unknown stylite near Callinicum; Abraham and Marun (sixth century) near Ingilene; one near Dara (seventh century); Symeon of the Olives (until 700) near Nisibis; Theodotus (eighth century) between Dara and Amida; Zachariah (eighth century) an unknown stylite near Nisibis, Abel, Cyrus the Old, Matthew, Daniel, John, Tuthael, Jacob the Old, Gabriel, George and Sergius of Mor Gabriel Monastery; one at Ḥabsenas; and one in Dayr Stune. We should also add to this list Theodosius, the stylite at the Monastery of Phesiltha who wrote the addition to the life of Baradaeus (John of Ephesus, Lives, vol. 19, 619); Joshua of Zuqnin (known also as Joshua the stylite) who is the probable author of the Chronicle of Zuqnin; and Jovinian the stylite who was 'a recluse in the tower' of the Monastery of Mor Elisha. Mor Ubil was probably the first known stylite in Ṭur ʿAbdin. He was an elder contemporary of Philoxenos of Mabbugh (d. 523). His pillar stood in the monastery named after himself in Midyat (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 114). Today the monastery is called after both Mor Abrohom and Mor Ubil. Although some late antique parts of this monastery still stand (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 35), there is no trace of a stylite column. For a recent discussion on the stylite column in Qalʿat Semʿan, see J. L. Biscop, 'Le prototype de la colonne de stylite', in *Nuit de pleine lune sur Amurru; mélanges offerts à Leila Badre*, ed. F. Briquel Chatonnet et al. (Geuthner: Paris, 2019), 73–95.

[126] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 77.

[127] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, III/1, 104.

[128] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 105–7, and 217, figs. 37 and 38.

nearly sixty years before the 'column' was built.[129] Simeon's story shows the efforts that were made to continue the tradition of stylitism and the appointment of stylites from different monasteries after the Arab conquest of the region. His aim was probably to continue the tradition of which he was part. The same effort was shown by the monks at Ḥabsenas, who took it in turns to live as recluses on top of the column.[130]

The continuity of this extreme ascetic practice, a century after the Islamic conquest, is striking; but so is the innovative form of the structure, which combines the functions of a tower and a stylite's column.[131] The column at Ḥabsenas is neither a monolith, like the column of Symeon the Younger near Antioch, nor a composite type, constructed of solid stone drums, like the column of Symeon the Elder; rather, it is built of masonry, smooth and round on the outside, rough on the inside to make it easy to climb. It is much wider than the rest of the columns for which we have evidence.[132] Another distinctive feature of this tower is the channel on the ground floor, for collecting and discharging water.

3.3.1.3 The *Bēth qadishe*

Bēth qadishe, meaning 'house of the saints', is the general term used for most of the funerary structures in the monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[133] They were used for the burials of patriarchs, bishops, monks, and, in some cases, of ordinary people. These buildings have become highly venerated and are architecturally significant, with varying forms. There is textual evidence indicating that some *bēth qadishe* were built before the church of the monastery. John of Ephesus tells us that the first building Addai and Abraham built when they started to construct their first monastery was the martyrs' chapel.[134] According to written sources, these spaces were used also for depositing relics brought from elsewhere, as when Mor Theodotus built a monastery above the Monastery of Mor Abai: 'When, by God's will, the monastic buildings were completed, Theodotus saw it and was glad. He formed the resolve to collect all the saints (i.e. relics) which belonged to him from the monasteries (in which he had stayed). From his youth until his old

[129] *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, fol. 125v. The inscription and the *Life* do not match. The inscription might be later. On the other hand, the *Life* (earliest manuscript dating to the nineteenth century) also has many problems (mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis') that may suggest that this column was later attributed to him.

[130] For example, Simeon's appointed successor was Jovinian the stylite, who was 'a recluse in the tower' of the Monastery of Mor Elisha; Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 177.

[131] M. Mundell Mango, 'New Stylite at Androna in Syria', *TM* 15 (2005): 329–42, 342.

[132] It is cylindrical with an outside diameter of 2.42 metres. Its present height is 7 metres in total, including the base. See Schachner, 'The Archaeology of the Stylite', for a comparative table.

[133] Some of the observations below have been published in Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Beth Qadishe'. The same article discusses the terms used to identify burial chambers, like *bēth sohde* and *bēth ʿolmo*.

[134] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, vol. 17, 299.

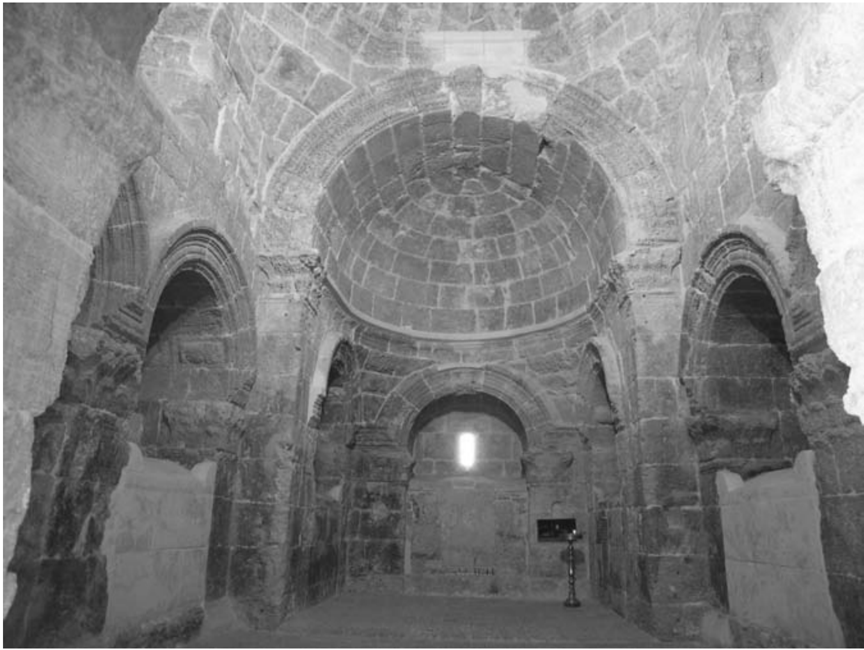

Fig. 3.3.6 Interior view of the *bēth qadishe* in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān

age he had collected them and now he laid them to rest in his own monastery as a treasury of saints.'[135]

The most elaborate example of a *bēth qadishe* in the region is found in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān (Fig. 3.3.6). The *bēth qadishe* stands to the south of the main church and is a dipartite space whose main axis lies in an east–west direction.[136] The sculpture in the *bēth qadishe* is identical with the sculpture on the apse-archivolt of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo next to it. The two spaces also have similar niches on their west façades (both interior and exterior), with uncut acanthus leaves, shells, and pilasters. These two spaces are without a doubt contemporary. Leroy has suggested, judging from the masonry, that the *bēth qadishe* may have been built not long before the church.[137] In addition to the significant archivolt sculpture and

[135] His treasure contained 5,500 bones. Palmer, *Life of Theodotus of Amida*, 197.2–3.

[136] In terms of layout it is comparable to some pre-Christian rock-cut burial chambers from the region, the geographically closest one being in Edessa. The burial chamber at Edessa no longer survives, as shanties have been built on top of it, but we have the plan drawn by Preusser and photographs taken by Segal (Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler*, pl. 43; Segal, *Edessa*, pls. 22–7). Many similar chambers from the pre-Christian period were recorded in Commagene, which shows the adaptation of the earlier formulae to Christian needs: R. Ergeç, *Nekropolen und Gräber in der südlichen Kommagene* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 2003). The arcosolia in the *bēth qadishe* at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān measure around 1.7 metres long which is typical for arcosolia elsewhere, but they are deeper.

[137] Leroy, 'L'état présent des monuments', 478–93, 487. The church has been dated between 526 and 536.

Fig. 3.3.7 Entrance to the *bēth qadishe* in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān

the profiled arches of the *arcosolia*, there are carved figural motifs on the pendentives of the semi-dome of the eastern part. The upper figure is a vase with an undulating vine coming out of it. This fragment looks like it is not in its original place. The lower figure is a shell motif, flanked by two dolphins.[138] The dolphins must have looked like those on the lintel of the entrance. The prominent sculpture of the *bēth qadishe* illustrates the significance of this space. Another point that emphasizes the importance of the building is its entrance. It has a small courtyard, a sort of porch formed with piers, and a doorway flanked by decorated niches (Fig. 3.3.7).

At the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, a structure made of large ashlar blocks with niches has been excavated by the inhabitants of the monastery (Fig. 3.3.8).[139] Unfortunately, no proper record was kept of the material found during the excavations. The structure recalls a square building called Deyr Kubbuk, which may be an early Christian or a pre-Christian burial structure.[140]

[138] Dolphins were commonly found in funeral contexts in both Christian and pagan art. They were portrayed as the carriers of persons to safety or immortality, R. M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), 159.

[139] These were not scientific excavations and were stopped by the Mardin Museum.

[140] Deyr Kubbuk is about 78 square metres, with eleven arcosolia and a pyramidal roof (Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, III/I, 116–20). It is difficult to determine its context since there are no other

Fig. 3.3.8 *bēth qadishe* (?) in Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ

In the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin, there are several burial chambers. The double-halled burial chamber (labelled as *bēth qadishe* in the plan in Fig. 3.3.5) has parallels with other late antique burial chambers.[141] There are different opinions regarding the function of the great octagon, which is located to the north-west of the main church. It is a domed structure inscribed in a square plan. It has deep arched niches on the cardinal points and rectangular niches between them (Fig. 3.3.9). It is entered through an arcaded walkway, which links it also to the church. The diameter of this space is 10.5 metres, which is equal to the height of the structure. This structure is popularly called *qubtho d-Theodora* (the dome of Theodora), referring to the Empress Theodora, whose sympathy for the miaphysites is known. However, there is no documented relationship

remains recorded around it, although the *deyr* in the name, which can mean 'monastery' amongst other things, may suggest a monastic context. Deyr Kubbuk recalls monumental Christian tombs with pyramidal roofs at al-Barah in Syria, which date to the fifth or sixth centuries, see H. Colvin, *Architecture and the After-life* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press 1991), fig. 95. Another example of a tower tomb, standing to the west of the Euphrates at Elif, is reminiscent of North Syrian examples with its pyramidal roof (T. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol. IV, p. 175). Apart from these, it recalls the pre-Christian funerary buildings of the Roman east and also of Ṭur ʿAbdin, such as the examples in the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa (Segal, *Edessa*, 29) and at Fafi, dating to the third century (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 27–9, 109).

[141] See especially the *bēth qadishe* at Yolbilen, which we dealt with in Chapter 2, Section 2.7, 'Constantia'.

Fig. 3.3.9 The so-called dome of Theodora

between her and the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, except as recorded in a late Garshuni manuscript.[142]

Given that the octagon was a common form for baptisteries and that the number eight was a symbol of the resurrection, it has been suggested that the octagon in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel was a baptistery.[143] Leroy argues that, whereas in the west baptism takes place in the parish, in the east, monasteries were the places for this rite, which might explain a baptistery on the scale of that of Qartmin.[144] In the late antique period, rural baptisteries were usually parts of

[142] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 145. Garshuni means another language, usually Arabic, written with Syriac alphabet. Palmer also notes that although the Chronicle of 819 was written at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin and although it records the death of Theodora, it does not mention any connection between this empress and the monastery (personal communication with Andrew Palmer, 10 October 2020).

[143] J. Leroy, 'Deux baptistères paléochrétiens d'Orient méconnus', *CA* 25 (1976): 1–6. Palmer agreed with this identification (*Monk and Mason*, 147). Leroy argued that there was a cistern underneath the octagon, which further supports the baptismal function. The current inhabitants of the monastery say that there is no cistern under this structure.

[144] The octagon in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel is actually bigger than the octagon in the core of the baptistery at Qalʿat Semʿan (*c*.491) (Khatchatrian, *Les baptistères*, fig. 58b) and is slightly smaller than the baptistery of St. Sophia at Constantinople, which both have octagonal arrangements: S. Eyice, 'Le baptistère de Sainte Sophie d'Istanbul', *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologie Cristiana* (Roma: Città del Vaticano, 1978), 257–73, 260.

pilgrimage centres or were attached to a village church. The Holy Land is rich in monastic baptisteries, of which a great majority coincide with a holy place or pilgrimage centre.[145] According to a lost letter of Philoxenos of Mabbug, quoted in a later hagiography, the Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin was a place of pilgrimage in the early sixth century.[146]

The rectangular niche on the south-west corner of the Octagon opens onto a hall which is 17.5 metres in length with niches in its west wall. It has the same construction technique as the octagon, namely alternating bands of brick and stone. Leroy and Palmer interpreted the hall to the west of the Octagon as the preparatory room for the baptismal rite. Yet this hall is far too big to be a preparatory room. The current inhabitants of the monastery refer to this space as the kitchen and the octagon as the dining room. The refectory or the dining hall, in which both prayers and communal meals were held, was an important space of the cenobitic life. It can be considered as both a sacred and a secular space. A refectory is a good indicator that a complex was a monastery.[147]

Falla Castelfranchi suggests that the Octagon may have had a funerary function.[148] As mentioned earlier, the Octagon was thought to have been a baptistery due to the abundance of octagonal baptisteries, but the octagon (with alternating square and semi-circular niches) was also a common form of burial structure.[149] We do not have any archaeological evidence, such as a font or an inscription, nor any textual source or local tradition that would allow us to identify the octagon at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel as a baptistery. Similarly, the *Qartmin Trilogy*, which gives a good account of what is on the ground today, does not mention a baptistery. On the other hand, the *Trilogy* records that in 648, 'the round House of Tombs of the House of Saints of this abbey' was cleared out and in it eight hundred skulls were found.[150] There are two other octagonal burial chambers in the monastery: the 'Dome of the Egyptians' and the 'Dome of the Departed'. They are both domed and located on the north-western side of the monastery. Each of

[145] M. Ben-Pechat, 'Baptism and Monasticism in the Holy Land: Archaeological and Literary Evidence', in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries*, ed. G. C. Bottini et al. (Jerusalem: Franciscan Print: 1990), 501–22.

[146] In the *Life* of Samuel there is a mention of a letter sent by the blessed Philoxenos to Eustochios saying: 'To go there [to Qartmin] seven times in faith is like going to Jerusalem, for it is built in the likeness and after the pattern of [that city], and it is laid out according to the same design'. Qartmin Trilogy, XVIII, 8–11; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 115.

[147] It has been shown that in the Holy Land, Egypt, and Syria, refectories had close links with the church or with the burial chamber S. Popović, 'The "Trapeza" in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts', *DOP* 52 (1998): 281–303, 286.

[148] Falla Castelfranchi, *Baptisteria*, 88.

[149] For an example, the late fourth-century mausoleum attached to the Church of St. Lorenzo has the same inner arrangement as the Octagon at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel. Colvin presented an example of the same form being used for a baptistery and a mausoleum in the case of a fourth-century baptistery and a fourth-century mausoleum from Milan, which are almost identical. According to Colvin, 'baptism and burial were linked symbolically in a way that made it quite appropriate for a common architectural form to serve for both': Colvin, *Architecture and the After-life*, 100, 106.

[150] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 59.

them has seven *arcosolia*. The Dome of the Egyptians is slightly larger, with an inner diameter of 7 metres.[151] The use of herringbone brick masonry and half-cylinder roof tiles (*imbrices*) in the vault of the Dome of the Egyptians suggests a date in the eighth century. The Dome of the Departed, on the other hand, appears to be of a later date. The octagon may have been the prototype for these two burial chambers.[152]

3.3.2 The Churches of the Monasteries

In the monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin, we usually find two or more churches[153] which were usually more or less contemporary with each other and which had different dedications. Almost all of the monastic churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin have a transverse-hall layout, that is, long in the north–south direction, with a tripartite sanctuary on the east end or a derivative of this type (Fig. 3.3.10).[154] One important exception is the main church of the Dayr al-Zaʿfarān (the Church of Mor Ḥananyo), which will be dealt in Section 3.3.2.3.

The transverse-hall-type plan is unusual for a church. In the wider Northern Mesopotamia, we find it in Surp Hagop and in Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa, although these are not exactly the same as those of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[155] Further afield, it is found in Cappadocia, Egypt, and Syria.[156] In Ṭur ʿAbdin, there are about thirty-eight

[151] The closest parallels to these structures, in terms of size, shape and probably date, are the octagonal chapels flanking the church at Dereağzı (early ninth century) in Asia Minor (Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, fig. 245). A similar structure exists in the Monastery of Mar Behnam in Iraq. It is the martyrion of Mar Behnam. See A. Harrak, *Le monastère de Mar-Behnam à la période atabeg—XIIIe S.* (Paris: Geuthner, 2018), 42–54.

[152] For more discussion on these structures and for a suggestion that there was a hierarchy amongst them in terms of who was buried in them, see Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Beth Qadishe'.

[153] In Syriac texts, the word *hayklo* is used for the churches in monasteries. The same word is used also for the neighbourhood chapel in a village. ʿ*idto* is used for the parish church where the priest celebrates. In a city the ʿ*idto* is the cathedral. Thus ʿ*idto* is always used as the main church of a settlement, whether it be a city or a village. Therefore, the word 'chapel' could be preferred for the translation of *hayklo* in the monastic context (I thank Andrew Palmer for this clarification). However, the chapel in English, according to the Oxford Dictionary is: A small building or room used for Christian worship in a school, prison, hospital, or large private house. Thus to avoid misunderstanding, I preferred to use 'churches'.

[154] The East Syrian monasteries on Mount Izlo have naves which are long in the east–west direction (mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis').

[155] For the former, Guyer, 'Surp Hagop (Djinndeirmene)'. For the latter, see Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, fig. 9.

[156] For an example from Cappadocia, see the Tokalı church: S. Kostof, *Caves of God: Cappadocia and its Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 96. The churches of Egypt which most resemble transverse-hall churches are the Wadi Natrun churches with transverse-hall choirs, for example the Church of Sitt Miriam at Deir es Suryani (H. Evelyn-White and W. Hauser, *The Monasteries of the Wadi ʿn Natrûn* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926–33), pl. 50. These are of a relatively late date. In addition, the churches of Wadi Natrun differ significantly from those in Ṭur ʿAbdin, since the nave there is divided in two, whereas in Ṭur ʿAbdin churches the nave is a single unit. See also Der Idj-Djuwani church in Hauran: Butler, *Early Churches in Syria*, 121; Tell Biʿa

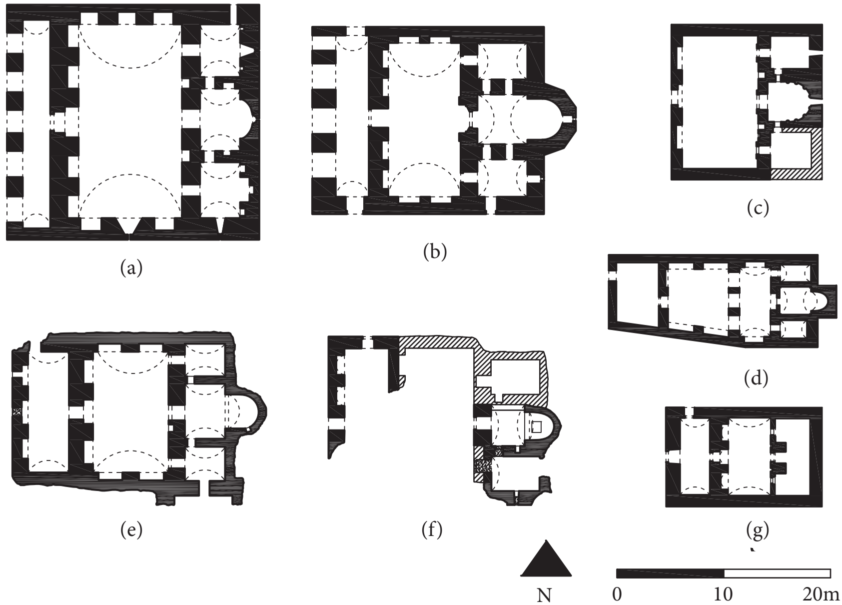

Fig. 3.3.10 Plans of transverse-hall-type churches of the monasteries of (a) Mor Gabriel at Qartmin; (b) Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ; (c) Mor Yuḥannon d-Kfone at Derikfan; (d) Mort Maryam Magdloyto at Ḥāḥ; (e) Dayro da-Ṣlibo at Çatalçam; (f) Mor Abai at Qelleth; (g) Mor Yuḥannon at Ḥāḥ

Source: Redrawn by the author and S. Kayasü after Guyer, Bell/Mundell Mango, and Wiessner.

examples of this type. It is tempting to relate the choice of this unusual plan type to the specific liturgical needs in a Syrian Orthodox monastery, but we do not know much about the early Syrian Orthodox liturgy and how far back present practice, which makes good use of the shape, can be dated. The deacons alternate between gathering around two lecterns, one on each side of the sanctuary entrance, and forming a single line facing east to make prostrations.

Some examples of the transverse-hall type, namely the main churches of the monasteries of Mor Gabriel, Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ, Dayro da-Ṣlibo, Mor Malke, Mor Abrohom at Midyat, the church at Ambar,[157] Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone, Mor Abai at Qelleth, and the secondary church of Yoldath Aloho in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān,

church near Callinicum (modern Raqqa) dating to 509: G. Kalla, 'A Holy Place from Mudbrick: The Sixth-century Church in the Monastery of Tall Biʿa, Syria', *Aram* 30 (2018): 147–60; the church in Tell Tuneinir: M. Fuller and N. Fuller, 'A Medieval Church in Mesopotamia', *Biblical Archaeologist* 57/1 (1994): 38–45, 43, and the Atrium Church at Apamea: J. Napoleone-Lemaire and J. C. Balty, *L'église à atrium de la grande colonnade* (Bruxelles: Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1969).

[157] The church at Ambar is discussed under Dara. The location of this church can be regarded as at the edge of Ṭur ʿAbdin.

show characteristics that make it possible to date them to the sixth century. The length of a transverse nave is usually around one and a half times larger than its width. The nave is usually one and a half to two times as big as the sanctuary, nave and sanctuary together forming an approximate square.[158] The naves of these churches usually have engaged low arcades resting on piers in the north, south, west, and occasionally on the east walls. Although these arcades recall arcosolia, the different sizes of the niches in different churches, depending on the length and equal distribution of the niches on the wall, suggest that they were not intended as burial niches. Still, in some cases, probably later, they were used for this purpose. The intention was probably to build strong two-layered walls with additional structural strength gained by the use of a low arch that would bear the massive brick or stone vaults.

Transverse-hall churches usually have a narthex lying along their west façade. Engaged piers similar to those in the nave appear in some of the narthexes as well, such as those of Dayro da-Ṣlibo and Ambar. In some other churches, such as the main churches of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel and of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ, there is an arcaded porch instead of a closed narthex. Unlike the two entrances pierced in the south wall of the nave in village churches, one for men and one for women, the monastic churches, designed for a single-sex community, have just one entrance in the west wall of the nave, just opposite the sanctuary.

The three parts of the sanctuary usually communicate with each other and with the nave by narrow doorways; even those which open onto the nave are relatively small, compared with the apses of village churches. The central part of the sanctuary holds the altar. In some cases, this part projects beyond the rest of the east wall, as in the cases of Ambar (now partly dismantled), Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, Dayro da-Ṣlibo, and Mor Abai at Qelleth (in ruins). In the first two cases the projecting apse is polygonal[159] on the outside. In Dayro da-Ṣlibo, it is difficult to tell because of the adjacent structures, and in Mor Abai, that part of the apse is in ruins. In other examples, the apses are usually inscribed in the rectangular plan. In these cases, the central room takes the form of an inscribed semi-circular apse, while in some later examples its east wall is simply straight. In some churches, the sanctuaries (including the protruding parts) are exceptionally wide, almost as wide as the nave, for example, Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ and Dayro da-Ṣlibo.

The side rooms are usually rectangular in shape. In the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, they are long in a north–south direction, whereas at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān they

[158] The approximate dimensions are: Mor Gabriel: 23 metres x 26.50 metres; Ambar: 17.90 metres x 23.50 metres; Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ: 17.20 metres x 22 metres. The vault of Mor Gabriel is 10.7 metres high; that of Ambar, 7 metres; that of Mor Yaʿqub, 6.9 metres.

[159] The apse of the church at Ambar is three-sided and Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ is five-sided. Graziadei does not list them in his analysis. To find them in the region may show that the churches of the region were built with forms common or generated in Constantinople. See Graziadei, 'Polygonal Apse as a Peculiar Feature'. See also the cathedral at Dara in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2 for polygonal apse.

are long in an east–west direction. According to the bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin, monks performed a quiet liturgy called *gnizo* in these flanking rooms.[160] Today, liturgical garments and objects are kept in them. In the past, the northern rooms might have functioned as a martyrium and the southern as a diaconicon, as was the case in Tall Biʿa in Syria, which is a mudbrick version dated by a mosaic inscription to 509.[161] The sanctuaries of these churches usually communicate with the naos through simple openings. However, there are some exceptions. In the church of the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone, the sanctuary doors are profiled; and the main entrance of the apse is higher than those of the two side rooms.[162] In the main church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, the central sanctuary is emphasized with an arch (Fig. 3.3.13).

The proportions of the transverse-hall-type plans changed over the years and centuries. The sanctuaries took different forms. Examples with projecting apses, like those in Ambar and Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, seem to be slightly later than Mor Gabriel, Dayro da-Ṣlibo, and probably Mor Abai at Qelleth. The church at Ambar, which has the transverse-hall layout has been mentioned in relation to Dara above. In the Ambar church, the apse is also polygonal and the vault of the nave is made of stone. The main church of Dayro da-Ṣlibo has no decoration that would make it possible to date it. Its monumental stone blocks hint at an early date, as is the case also with Mor Abrohom in Midyat, Mor Melke, and Mor Abai at Qelleth.

The Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone in Derikfan (Nurlu) is remarkable in the sense that it has the same apse arrangement as the main church of the monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar in Mount Izlo and the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ. It has engaged colonnades and niches. It is interesting to follow how some architectural features appear in different contexts, as Mar Abraham is an East Syrian monastery, Yoldath Aloho is a village church combining the features of hall and transverse-hall-type churches, and the remains dedicated to Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone belong to a West Syrian monastery. The church in the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone, which was built between the late sixth and the mid-seventh century according to the Life of the saint,[163] is smaller in size than the other early sixth-century examples and larger than the eighth-century ones. Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālah may be the example where the transverse-hall type has found its perfect dimensions and proportions (Fig. 3.3.11).

[160] Personal correspondence with Mor Timotheos Samuel Aktaş (July 2006). This is probably what led Baumstark to describe the sanctuary of these churches as a 'closed sanctuary'. A. Baumstark, 'Ein Alterskriterium der nordmesopotamischen Kirchenbauten', *OC* 5 (1915): 111–31, 115.

[161] Kalla, 'A Holy Place from Mudbrick', 150. See also M. Krebernik, 'Schriftfunde aus Tall Biʿa', *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 123 (1991): 41–70, 43; G. Kalla, 'Christentum am oberen Euphrat: Das byzantinische Kloster von Tall Biʿa', *Antike Welt* 2 (1999): 131–42, 135.

[162] For recent pictures, see J. Correia, 'Monastery of Mor Yuhannon of Kfone', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, forthcoming), 129–31.

[163] Palmer, 'La Montagne aux LXX Monastères', 101.

Fig. 3.3.11 Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, main church

3.3.2.1 Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālah

The main church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālah is well proportioned, compact, and finely built. It has a dynamic form on its exterior with variations in the roofs and the protruding, five-sided polygonal apse (Fig. 3.3.12). It has an arcaded portico with massive piers, similar to that of the church of Mor Gabriel. In the interior, a cornice rings the nave, turning upwards to surround the windows on the south façade. The articulation of the opening leading to the apse with an archivolt and two pilasters emphasizes the sanctuary more than in any other transverse-hall-type church, where we typically find merely a rectangular doorway (Fig. 3.3.13). The decoration on these pilasters and the partly surviving bands on the frame of the entrance of the church point to a sixth-century date, despite the inscriptions recording the rebuilding in the eighth century, which may in fact be pointing at the rebuilding of the vault.

The church has a skilfully built brick vault (Fig. 3.3.13), as does the narthex (Fig. 3.3.14). Such vaults, incorporating bricks placed diagonally (herringbone) and half-cylinder roof tiles (imbrices) on the surface, date to the eighth century. Thus, the vault of the church is probably contemporary with other brick vaults covering the hall-type churches of the region. Unlike other brick vaults, in this vault the stone courses continue to a considerable height. The church may have originally been covered by a stone vault, as is the case in Ambar church and was

Fig. 3.3.12 Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, five-sided apse of the main church

Fig. 3.3.13 Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, interior of the main church

Fig. 3.3.14 Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ, vault of the portico in front of the main church

probably the case in the main church of Mor Abai monastery. Later, the upper courses were destroyed and had to be replaced by brick.

A *terminus ante quem* for the church is provided by an inscription recording the renovation of the church sometime between 752 and 755.[164] One of the inscriptions on the vault lists the names of twenty-five benefactors, of whom some are from 'this village', with the sum given by each. Some gave one *zuzo* (a coin equal to a Greek drachma) each, whereas others donated more than one hundred.[165] The brick vault may have been built during that renovation. This church seems to have found the right proportions for building a transverse- hall church and has introduced some articulations, especially the protruding apse and the arch on the door opening to the sanctuary with pilasters, which have mouldings. These may indicate that this church is slightly later than the church of Mor Gabriel and the Ambar church, as it is a refined version of them.

[164] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', B1. Scholars have proposed dates for this church ranging from the sixth to the ninth centuries. Deichmann and Peschlow dated it to the sixth century (*Zwei spätantike Ruinenstätten*, 24); Bell dated it first to the same date as Mor Gabriel (which she thought was late fifth or sixth century, and then to *c.*700 (Bell/Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 10, 148). Guyer, on the basis of its resemblance to the Kaishum church (which he dated to 818–845 on the basis of an inscription) suggested a ninth-century date (Guyer, *Surp Hagop*, 500).

[165] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', B2.

3.3.2.2 The Main Church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel

The Monastery of Mor Gabriel at Qartmin is the seat of the bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin. It is a large monastery with buildings dating to various periods.[166] The tradition claims that the Monastery of Mor Gabriel was founded in 397. The foundation story of the monastery has been studied in detail by Palmer, who called it the '*Qartmin Trilogy*' because it comprises the lives of three monks who were important for the history of the monastery, and because the monastery is located near the village of Qartmin. Palmer, noting several problems in the text, concludes that it is a 'product of several reworkings' and dates its compilation to sometime between 819 and *c.*969.[167] According to the Trilogy, the monastery received the patronage of the emperors Honorius, Arcadius, Theodosius II, and Anastasius.[168]

The *Qartmin Trilogy* especially mentions emperor Anastasius' patronage. Given that Anastasius built the nearby city of Dara, and that most of the surviving evidence from the monastery (the impressive wall-mosaics and the *opus sectile* pavement) seem to be from the early sixth century, we can argue that the patronage of Anastasius is highly plausible and we can accept the date 512 offered by the *Qartmin Trilogy* for the building of the main church of the monastery. This coincides with the beginning of the reign of Severus as patriarch of Antioch, and the Monastery of Mor Gabriel has a long history of dedication to the theological cause of Severus. While describing the siege of Amida in 502, Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor mentions a certain John, bishop of the city, who came from the monastery at Qartmin.[169] This means the monastery existed before Anastasius' patronage and there was probably an earlier church. However, it is still difficult to confirm the patronage of Honorius, Arcadius, and Theodosius II, as claimed in the Trilogy.

The main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel is the largest of the transverse-hall-type churches. Its nave is covered with a brick barrel vault and is lit by windows on the south wall. The nave has engaged low arcades resting on engaged piers in the north, south, and west walls. The *opus sectile* pavement and

[166] There are notable ruins within the boundaries of the monastery that are not accessible to visitors. Amongst these Palmer has identified a cistern, two churches, a long arcade, and a charnel-house (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 41f, 46–9, 101). Unfortunately, these structures have not been excavated, and some have been restored in a way that compromised the archaeological record. It is almost impossible to suggest a date for them.

[167] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 13–17; Qartmin Trilogy, XXVII, XXVIII, XXXI, and XXXII. The source of the manuscript tradition of the *Qartmin Trilogy* is the British Library, Add. MS 17,265, but other manuscripts are necessary to complete the picture. The text is edited on a microfiche attached to Palmer's book *Monk and Mason*. The *Qartmin Trilogy* is composed of the Lives of Samuel and Simeon (the founders of the monastery; the latter died in 433) and the *Life* of Gabriel (bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin, d. 648). The compiler bridged the gap between the fifth and the seventh centuries by inserting other materials, notably a record of the building of the main church of the monastery in 512 on the orders of the emperor Anastasius. I thank Andrew Palmer for this information.

[168] The description of most of the buildings in the *Qartmin Trilogy* gives the impression that what was on the ground was narrated and an emperor was attached to it as a patron. Probably based on the text, Palmer dates some buildings as earlier foundations (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 49–73).

[169] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, VII.3.24.

the expensive wall mosaics, with an incomplete Greek inscription in the main sanctuary of the monastery, support the claim that the monastery benefited from imperial patronage. According to a non-hagiographical document inserted into the *Qartmin Trilogy* between the Life of Simeon and that of Gabriel, the emperor Anastasius sent gold and craftsmen to the Monastery of Mor Gabriel for the construction of the great church of the monastery that was finished in 512:

> When, therefore, King Anastasius heard of the fine reputation of the blessed men in this abbey, he sent much gold with his servants, and craftsmen such as prepare hewn stone and baked bricks, and (other) skilled craftsmen, and architects, for the construction of the Great Temple, the foundations of which had been laid by the angel and Mor Simeon. The names of the architects were Theodore and Theodosius, and they were surnamed 'the sons of Shufnay'. He sent also goldsmiths and silversmiths and bronzesmiths and ironsmiths, men to make pictures and chisellers of marble blocks, men skilled in putting together mosaics to make the forms of crosses and well-ordered committees of learned advisers (all of them) skilled in building in a manner worthy of praising God and of honouring his saints.[170]

The text, which goes into great detail, ends as follows:

> The finishing touches were put to this holy Temple and these amazing objects and regal vessels of the highest quality were brought from the Imperial City in the year eight hundred and twenty-three (A.D. 511/2), in which Mor Severus was consecrated Patriarch of Antioch.[171]

Anastasius's support of the Miaphysite cause is known. This support was especially crucial in gaining the loyalty of the eastern provinces when there were continuous wars with the Persians. The Monastery of Mor Gabriel probably received its imperial benefaction after the city of Dara had been built, for all these skilled workmen were already in the region. They were probably not summoned just for the monastery, as claimed by the document included in the *Qartmin Trilogy*; the church of Ambar, just to the south of Dara, mentioned above, the decoration of Mor Gabriel, and the building of the city of Dara should be considered as parts of the same building programme.[172]

[170] *Qartmin Trilogy*, LIX. [171] *Qartmin Trilogy*, LXI.

[172] A tradition affirms that 'all the churches of Ṭur 'Abdin were built by Anastasius' and mentions the monastic churches of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ Mor Abrohom (Midyat), Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone at Derikfan, Cross of Hesno d-Kifo (Defne) and the village churches of 'Urdnus, Kfarze, and notes that 'the sons of Shufnay were the craftsmen, Theodosius and Theodorus'. See Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 52, n. 25. However, that is probably not the case as we shall suggest different dates for some of them.

Fig. 3.3.15 Mosaics in the sanctuary of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel

In the barrel vault and lateral lunettes of the central sanctuary of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, we find the only *in situ* wall mosaic from the region (Fig. 3.3.15). These mosaics, together with those in Cyprus and at Mount Sinai, are amongst the few Byzantine wall mosaics that have survived to the east of Constantinople. They have been studied in detail and photographed by Marlia Mundell (Mango) and E. J. W. Hawkins, who argue for a sixth-century date.[173] The mosaic has various representations, the most significant being the ciboria depicted on both lunettes. On each side of the ciboria, a bowl lamp is suspended from the arm springing from the base of the dome. Two trees flank the ciboria. Other figures in the mosaic are large crosses, amphorae with vine scrolls, eight-pointed stars, and diamonds. The ornamental vocabulary and the stylistic and iconographic features of the mosaics have parallels with the fifth- and sixth-century mosaics both of the east and of the west.[174] It has been suggested that an

[173] M. Mundell and E. J. Hawkins, 'The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mar Samuel, Mar Simeon, and Mar Gabriel near Kartmin with a Note on the Greek Inscription by C. Mango', *DOP* 27 (1973): 279–96. For a recent report on its state of preservation, see P. Blanc and M. L. Courboulès, 'The State of Preservation of the Byzantine Mosaics of the Saint Gabriel Monastery of Qartamin, Tur Abdin (South-West [sic] Turkey) October, 10th–14th, 2006', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 11/1 (2011): 95–106.

[174] The diagonally placed amphorae in the four corners of the barrel vault with vines growing towards the centre have western parallels in Capua, Rome, and Ravenna (Mundell and Hawkins, 'Mosaics', 285). Such amphorae can also be found in the architectural sculpture from which vine scrolls spring at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān and at Nisibis. The rinceaux in the mosaic are similar to those that cover the arch soffits of the galleries of St. Sophia at Constantinople. The eight-pointed star in the border can be

Fig. 3.3.16 *Opus sectile* in the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel

Antiochene workshop executed this mosaic.[175] On the lower part of the design on the south lunette, there was a Greek inscription reading: 'The mosaic work was done . . . '.[176] Unfortunately no date has been preserved.

The sanctuary of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel also contains the best-preserved *opus sectile* floor of Northern Mesopotamia (Fig. 3.3.16).[177] It must have been laid when the church was built in the early sixth century. However, Donceel-Voûte, who dates the *opus sectile* at the Atrium Church at Apamea after 573, thinks that the pavement at Mor Gabriel, which is similar in style to that at Apamea, cannot be earlier. She argues that this small sanctuary floor at Mor Gabriel could not have been the prototype for the later *opus*

found in St. Sophia at Constantinople and later in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and on an early mosaic in the Kalenderhane Cami at Constantinople. It is a widely used motif going back to the second century AD (Mundell and Hawkins, 'Mosaics', 288).

[175] Mundell and Hawkins, 'Mosaics', 298.

[176] 'A Note on the Greek Inscription' by C. Mango in Mundell and Hawkins, 'Mosaics', 290, 296.

[177] The main design principals of the *opus sectile* pavement at Mor Gabriel take their form from the layout of the sanctuary. It is divided into three parts: the curved part to the east of the sanctuary, the rectangular main part, and the squarish threshold part. In the middle of the rectangular part there is a shield of concentric rows of curvilinear triangles arranged around a marble disc. The space between the big rectangle and the circular centre is divided into squares, each composed of smaller squares. There are cross-like motifs composed of four petals in these squares, which are placed either in parallel or diagonally.

sectile.[178] This argument probably stems from seeing the monastery as remote and inferior. However, when seen as an offshoot of the foundation of Dara, it makes sense that we find the best-quality workmanship here. As mentioned above, for the construction of the city of Dara, workmen from all around the Empire were present in the vicinity of the monastery in the early sixth century. Some of the skilled workers may have come from important artistic centres such as Edessa or Antioch; at any rate, the makers of the *opus sectile* pavement must have come from somewhere to the east of Constantinople because *opus sectile* paving was popular in Asia Minor, Syria, and Cyprus in the sixth century,[179] but rare in Constantinople. Amongst the fragments of the *opus sectile*, we find reused fragments of marble, perhaps from the wall revetments of the sanctuary as described in the Qartmin Trilogy.

3.3.2.3 The Church of Mor Ḥananyo at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān

The main church of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān lies in the eastern part of the monastery and is named after Mor Ḥananyo who refounded the monastery in 793 (Fig. 3.3.17).[180] However, the structure dates from a much earlier time. Mundell (Mango) has argued for a date between 526 and 536. She has suggested that the caves above Dayr al-Zaʿfarān were places of refuge for monks from Amida between 521 and 526 and the monastery must have been built after 526 when the persecution ceased and before 536 when it started again.[181] Since Mor Gabriel received its decoration under Anastasius, it is likely that Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, too, was built in his period. However, it is also possible that it was built during Justinian's reign when the construction works continued at Dara and Resafa. In both, we find sculpture in a style similar to that at Mor Ḥananyo.[182] Unlike the church at Mor Gabriel, we do not have any textual sources regarding the patronage of the church of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān. However, the innovative and refined design of the church, which is

[178] Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 223.

[179] The spiral disc in the centre of the *opus sectile* in the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel finds parallels in the Qalʿat Semʿan east basilica (first half of the sixth century); in Kampanopetra at Salamis in Cyprus (sixth century) (Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 224); and in Daphne-Yakto near Antioch (end of the fifth century) (U. Peschlow, 'Zum byzantinischen opus sectile-Boden', *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Kurt Bittel*, ed. R. M Boehmer and H. Hauptmann (Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 1983), Plate. 89; in Apamea (Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 210) and in the *extra muros* tomb-church at Korykos (F. Tülek, 'Late Roman and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics in Cilicia', PhD thesis submitted to the University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign, 2005: fig. 32.12). Apart from these, there are other examples of *opus sectile* in Cilicia at the centralized church in Anemurium, the church in Aydıncık-Celenderis, the three churches at Dağpazarı, the two churches at Elaiussa-Sebaste, the four churches in Korykos, the two churches and the bath in Meryemlik, the trench B (bath) in Silifke, and in the Alacami Basilica (Tülek, *Late Roman and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics in Cilicia*, 376). The petals forming crosses and the square arrangement are elements shared with Apamea. The small size of the pieces that form the *opus sectile* at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel may be presented as further evidence for its early date.

[180] Leroy, 'Monuments chrétiens', 490.

[181] M. Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture', 511–28.

[182] M. Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture', 528.

Fig. 3.3.17 The main church (Mor Ḥananyo) of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān and the *bēth qadishe*. Hazro mountains in the background where there are rock-cut monasteries

different from the other monastic churches, and its elaborate architectural sculpture points to major patronage. The main churches of the monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin usually lack architectural sculpture. The Church of Mor Ḥananyo is exceptional in that respect.

The Church of Mor Ḥananyo has a square nave of 8 metres. Other monastic churches have engaged arcades on their north, south, and sometimes west walls. In Mor Ḥananyo, there are large exedras in the east, north, and south walls instead. The eastern apse exedra is larger than the others. It has a tripartite sanctuary like the monastic churches, but the central chamber is emphasized with a large decorated apse-archivolt as in the village churches. Today, the Church of Mor Ḥananyo has a modern cross-vault; its original roof must have been completely different. Given the thickness of the walls and the shape and dimensions of the nave, the church must have originally been covered by a brick dome. As we have mentioned, transverse-hall churches, on the other hand, have barrel vaults of brick.

A cornice runs all along the triconch nave, turning into an archivolt in the apse and in the arches of the semidomes in the south and north exedras (Fig. 3.3.18). There is another cornice at the upper level of the main church, just under the modern cross-vault. This cornice was not visible before the restoration in 2005. The cornice displays the following sequence: a band of flower-motifs, a band of dentils, a band of bead-and-reel, and a band of palmettes. In some parts of this

Fig. 3.3.18 Apse of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān

cornice, instead of palmettes in the highest band, there are carved birds, recalling the birds on the pilasters flanking the apse-archivolt of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ. There are ten bosses on the interior cornice of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo, of which two are in the shape of amphorae and eight in that of plaited baskets.[183]

A distinguished feature of the decoration in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān is its niches on the west wall, both inside and outside the church.[184] They are about 1 metre in width, and framed by two pilasters surmounted by a moulded arch. The arches have a three-band moulding consisting of dentils, a beaded astragal, and upright acanthus-leaves. There are Alpha and Omega inscribed in the niches, which are

[183] The shape of the baskets and the presence of fruits are similar to the examples at Seleucia Pieria (Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture', fig. 9). In terms of the tall shape and the diagonal weaving, the Mor Ḥananyo baskets are stylistically similar to the basket attached to a capital excavated in Daphne, Antioch (Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture', 521–2). As for the amphorae, a similar but smaller type can be found in the frieze of the Amida Great Mosque. There are vases in the doorway decorations of the baptistery of Nisibis, and amphorae in the apse archivolts of Dayr Metinan and Dayr al-Zaʿfarān. The latter two are very similar to the amphorae at Resafa (see Brands, *Die Bauornamentik*, pl. 64d). and some Limestone Massif churches like Qalb Lozeh (see C. Strube, *Baudekoration im nordsyrischen*', vol. II, pl. 39f).

[184] Niches were common decorative features of Roman architecture. Later in Christian architecture, we continue to find them. The Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople has the most impressive niches of early Christian architecture. See R. M. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul* (London: Harvey Miller, 1989).

Fig. 3.3.19 Architectural sculpture in the Church of Mor Ḥananyo at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān

the only late antique inscriptions in the church (Fig. 3.3.19). The niches in the interior walls and on the façade of the *bēth qadishe* at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān do not have elaborate sculpture but instead are plainly moulded, with shells decorating their conches. The pilasters framing the niches are fluted and crowned with capitals similar to those that adorn the interior niches of the church.

Together with that of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ, the door frame of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo is exceptional, since most of the sixth-century door frames in Ṭur ʿAbdin have simple mouldings. In Mor Ḥananyo, we find upright acanthus leaves, which we also find in the interior niches of the church. Highly decorated door frames are reminiscent of the baptistery of Nisibis. A scroll with animals decorates the façades of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo, at the level of the springing of the dome. Although the type is very common in late antique art, it is considered rare in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria.[185] The sculpture in the Church of Mor Ḥananyo is a transitional style between the fourth- and eighth-century mouldings in the region (see Fig. 4.1 for a comparative table).

[185] Although it is carved on a *cyma recta*, the figures of the animated scroll have a flat surface cut at a 90 degree angle. This recalls the scroll in Seleucia Pieria, which was carved in *champlevé* style (Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture', 520). For a discussion on the scrolls with animals, see C. Dauphin, 'The Development of the "Inhabited Scroll" in Architectural Sculpture and Mosaic Art from Late Imperial Times to the Seventh Century A.D.', *Levant* 19 (1987): 183–212.

3.3.2.4 Secondary Churches of the Monasteries

In the monasteries there is usually more than one church. To the south-east of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ lies the Church of Mor Barṣhabo.[186] It has a transverse-hall-type plan with a construction technique similar to that of the main church, only it is smaller. At the Monastery of Mor Abrohom in Midyat, there is a smaller transverse-hall-type church to the north of the main church.[187] In Ambar, we find a hall-type church, located to the south-west of the main church. In Mor Gabriel, there is a church called 'Forty Martyrs' towards the north-western part of the monastery, which is a small transverse-hall-type church, and to the south-west of it, there is a three-aisled pier-basilica which is dedicated to Yoldath Aloho (for the plan, see the western part of Fig. 3.3.5). This plan type is unusual for Ṭur ʿAbdin, but its masonry points to a late antique foundation. To the north-west of the main church of the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon da-Kfone there are further spaces, including a chapel, to be recorded.[188]

The Church of Yoldath Aloho in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, today introduced to visitors as 'the baptistery' (as it contains a baptismal font), is one of the most distinctive of the secondary churches of the monasteries (see plan in Fig. 3.3.2). Patriarch Aphrem Barsoum, writing in the early twentieth century, said he believed it was older than the Church of Mor Ḥananyo, the main church of the monastery.[189] The church has a typical transverse-hall-type layout. A wide brick arch, slightly smaller than the width of the nave, is visible on the east wall. There is a similar projecting arch on the north wall. It is covered with plaster, so it is hard to tell whether it is also of brick. These two arches give the impression that the nave of the church was covered with a vault or dome, most probably of brick, like the cross-vaults covering the sanctuary rooms.

The central room of the tripartite sanctuary and the room to the north of it (marked with x in plan) have remains of mosaics.[190] These are the only floor mosaics, as opposed to the *opus sectile* at Mor Gabriel, that have survived in the

[186] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, I/I, 39–43.

[187] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, figs. 23, 36.

[188] Wiessner, who recorded the church, does not mention the other spaces, one of them probably a chapel, which is used as a barn today. Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, I/I, 94–8, fig. 20, I/II, fig. 53–6.

[189] E. Barsavm [= Aphrem Barsoum], *Zihniyetlerin Bahçesinde Deyruzzafaran Manastırı'nın Tarihi ve Mardin Abraşiyesi İle Manastırlarının Özet Tarih*, 1917, trans. G. Akyüz (İstanbul: Mardin Tarihi İhtisas Kütüphanesi, 2006), 4.

[190] In the central room there is a border made up of octagons with squares and rectangles in them. There are three rows of different coloured borders. A guilloche and another series of three borders follow these. The central arrangement of the mosaic is composed of concentric circles of two types. In the first type, there are crosses intersecting horizontally and vertically with the circles; in the second, crosses with diamonds in the four ends intersect diagonally with the circles. The mosaic in the north room of the sanctuary is simpler. There is a single coloured border in the far edge of the room. It is followed by a border composed of octagons. Unlike the octagons in the central room, the octagons in this room are interlocking, forming squares at their intersection. There are three rows of bands framing the octagons. The central field is composed of diamond-shaped floral motifs. The octagonal border of

churches of the monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The style of the mosaics[191] and the pattern of brick masonry allow us to date this church to the sixth century. However, in the absence of any sculpture in the church, it is still difficult to tell if the Church of Yoldath Aloho antedates the church of Mor Ḥananyo.

3.3.2.5 Possible Origins and the Transformation of the Transverse-hall Plan

As it is an unusual plan, many suggestions have been made regarding the origins of the transverse-hall plan. Bell looked at Babylonian and Assyrian architecture to explain the origins of the plans of Ṭur ʿAbdin churches: 'The broadways-lying chamber is Babylonian, the lengthways Assyrian, though possibly borrowed from architectural creations outside Mesopotamia.'[192] Monneret de Villard also explained this architecture as a result of the western influences on Babylonian types.[193] Grabar suggested that the transverse type was derived from memorial churches like that of St. John the Baptist at Jerusalem (450–460). He argued that the architects in Ṭur ʿAbdin took the famous martyria of their days as their models.[194] On the basis of no stated evidence, Sarre and Herzfeld claimed that the transverse-hall type originated from Sinai.[195] Guyer also suggested an Egyptian origin based on the argument that Syrian monasticism had its origins in Egyptian monasticism.[196] Fourdrin tried to find an Apamean link.[197] However, the examples in the area of Apamea (Dana, Btirsa, Sinsarah, and el Bara) show important differences from the transverse-hall churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. The latter have barrel vaults with either stone or brick whereas the nave of the structures around Apamea have timber roofs and consequently do not have engaged arcades.

the central room is a common motif which, besides many others, can be found in the village of Harap in the Upper Euphrates (Candemir and Wagner, 'Christliche Mosaiken', 192–231, Plate 85); in a martyrium dated to the year 431, dedicated to St. Sergios at Yukarı Söğütlü (Candemir and Wagner, 'Christliche Mosaiken', art. cit., Textabb. 11); in the Houses of the Buffet Supper and of the Green Carpet at Antioch (D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947], CXXVb and CXXVIIIa, respectively); and in the Holy Trinity church at the Monastery of St. Simeon the Younger near Antioch (Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, fig. 179). The interlocking octagons in the border of the north room are reminiscent of the border in Hülümen, near the Euphrates (Candemir and Wagner, 'Christliche Mosaiken', art. cit., Plates 89, 28) and in the Church of St. Babylas at Antioch, see Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 25. The pattern of diamonds that forms the central arrangement of the north room can also be found in the Euphrates area, for example, at İkizkuyu, dating to the sixth or seventh centuries (Candemir and Wagner, 'Christliche Mosaiken', art cit., 227) and especially on the background of the mosaic in the nave of Houeidjit Halaoua, dated to the year 471 (Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 146).

[191] Similar mosaics exist in the area north of Constantia, mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia'.

[192] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 8.

[193] Monneret de Villard, *Mezopotamya Mimarisinde Kutsal Mekanlar*, 62.

[194] He referred to two transverse martyria, one at Salona in Dalmatia, the other at Tipasa in Algeria, with which he connects the transverse churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin. However, this argument is far from convincing since the parallel examples mentioned are widely separated geographically and are not real parallels except for the presence of transverse naves. Grabar, *Martyrium*, 131–2.

[195] Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 347.

[196] S. Guyer, 'Surp Hagop', 505.

[197] J. P. Fourdrin, 'Les Églises à nef transversale d'Apamène et du Ṭûr ʿAbdîn', *Syria* 62 (1985): 319–35.

The sanctuaries of the transverse churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin are tripartite whereas the structures around Apamea have a single chamber projecting from the centre of the eastern façade.[198] F. W. Deichmann and Urs Peschlow noted an Apamean link with another Northern Mesopotamian building which is outside Ṭur ʿAbdin—the Mor Yaʿqub monastery, which lies on a hill 7 kilometres west of Edessa.[199]

Both the examples in the vicinity of Apamea and Mor Yaʿqub in Edessa are two-storied and have a single room protruding from the east wall. They were probably both covered with timber. Mor Yaʿqub has a rectangular sanctuary, which is vaulted—a feature that links it to the churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin. According to Deichmann and Peschlow, Edessa, lying in the middle, played the key role in connecting the architectural traditions in north and west Syria and the transverse-hall churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[200] Edessa was an important centre of early monasticism and a source of inspiration for ascetics. However, as remarked in our introduction, there is no need to look to Edessa for the origin of every tradition. The transverse-hall plan may have developed in Ṭur ʿAbdin. After all, this regional plan differs in important respects from the Apamean examples, with the exception of the Atrium Church,[201] which is later than the examples in Ṭur ʿAbdin. The existence of transverse churches in Tall Bi ʿa and in Tuneinir in northern Syria shows the distribution of the type in the region.[202] These two churches are constructed of mudbrick and probably had timber roofs. They do not have the engaged piers that we find in Ṭur ʿAbdin churches. The transverse-hall-type churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin stand out architecturally because of their well-cut stone blocks. They must have influenced the later occurrence of the type elsewhere. In any case, a search for origins is probably not a useful exercise.

After the Arab conquest, transverse-hall churches continued to be built in the monasteries, but on a much smaller scale. Some changes were also introduced, such as the absence of dividing walls between the rooms of the sanctuary (as at the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon at Ḥāḥ, which can be relatively securely dated to

[198] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, ix.

[199] Mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2, 'Around Edessa'.

[200] Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, 61.

[201] An important difference is that the Atrium Church at Apamea is an urban example, whereas in Mesopotamia all the examples are rural. The Atrium Church was founded in the fifth century and went through important changes in the sixth and seventh centuries (Napoleone-Lemaire and Balty, *L'église à atrium*). The addition of a polygonal apse to this church, similar to that of Mor Yaʿqub, may support my argument above that the polygonal apse was introduced to this type later. We should also note here that the Atrium Church at Apamea has an *opus sectile* pavement, dating to 573, which is similar to the *opus sectile* pavement of the main sanctuary of Mor Gabriel dated by a text to 512. See Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements*, 219–23.

[202] Kalla, 'Christentum am oberen Euphrat', 131–42; Kalla, 'A Holy Place from Mudbrick', 147–60; Tell Tuneinir: M. Fuller and N. Fuller, 'A Medieval Church in Mesopotamia'. These churches are remarkable for their floor mosaics.

739/40 by an inscription[203]), or an additional space between the sanctuary and the naos (in the church of the Monastery of Mary Magdalen) (see Fig. 3.3.10, d, g for plans). Its doorway has a winged palmette sculpture, recalling early Islamic examples such as Mshatta.[204] In the case of Mor Sergius and Bacchus, there are many Syriac inscriptions, one of which is dated either to 691 or 789,[205] and some ornamental features suggest an eighth-century date. In this church, too, the sanctuary is not divided. Similar to some of the larger examples of the type, it has a large room to the north. The transverse-hall-type church with the most distinctive decoration in the style of the eighth century is the church of Mor Samuel at Ḥāḥ, located just north of Mor Sobo. Its location, small size, and poor-quality masonry suggests it was not a monastery but a later church built in the transverse-hall plan using spolia from an eighth-century building (Fig. 3.2.13).[206]

3.3.2.6 The Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ

Bell described the Church of Yoldath Aloho (Mother of God) at Ḥāḥ as the 'crowning glory' of Ṭur ʿAbdin and dated it to around 700.[207] As with the hall-type churches, the style of its architectural sculpture and brickwork is the main reason for dating it to the period after the Arab conquest. It is noted above (in Section 3.2, 'Villages') that Ḥāḥ seems to have experienced a surge of prosperity in the eighth century. The Church of Yoldath Aloho must have been rebuilt in the eighth century on the remains of an existing church or another structure, as we find exceptionally large stones at the level of its foundations.

Today, the church is in the entrance of the village and is in use as a parish church. However, because of its similarities with the Church of Mor Ḥananyo in Dayr al-Zaʿfarān,[208] it is discussed here under the monastic churches. These two churches are similar in plan, in that both have conches at the north and south ends of the nave and, in elevation, in that each of them has a high drum. Unlike other transverse-type churches, both have a central sanctuary connected with the nave by a wide archivolt comparable with those of the hall-type churches of the region. The nave of the church is long in the north–south direction and has a narthex of the same length on its west side (Fig. 3.3.20). The cloister vault in the centre and, below this, the three semi-domes with which the east, north, and south exedras are roofed, make the church a compact building, centralized not in plan, but at the

[203] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', A2. Although the decoration in that church is limited to a simple vine scroll, the style is very similar to the stylized classical decoration that we mentioned while discussing the village churches.

[204] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 127.

[205] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', B10, 112–14.

[206] Wiessner, *Christliche Kultbauten*, I/I, 120–3, fig. 121, I/I, pls. 67–70.

[207] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 20.

[208] The two churches have been compared before; see Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 115.

Fig. 3.3.20 Exterior view of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ

roof level (Fig. 3.3.21 and 3.3.23). This distinguishes it both from the transverse-hall-type churches and from the Church of Mor Ḥananyo.

The half-dome of the apse is decorated with a carved cross, such as those that adorn the conches of several hall-type churches and *bēth ṣlawotho* in the region. In the apse, there are niches on engaged colonnades (Fig. 3.3.22). Similar niches are found in the apse of the sixth-century Monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar and in the church of the Monastery of Mor Yuḥannon of Kfone, though in the latter, only the capitals of the colonnades remain.[209] In terms of the entrance portico, the

[209] This decorative feature appears in the sixth-century churches of Egypt but they are not of the same classical character. The White Monastery near Sohag (440) has niches with gazelles, amphorae with vines, shells, and wreathed crosses decorating the apse in the Church of St. Shenute: see J. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c.300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), figs. 462 and 473.

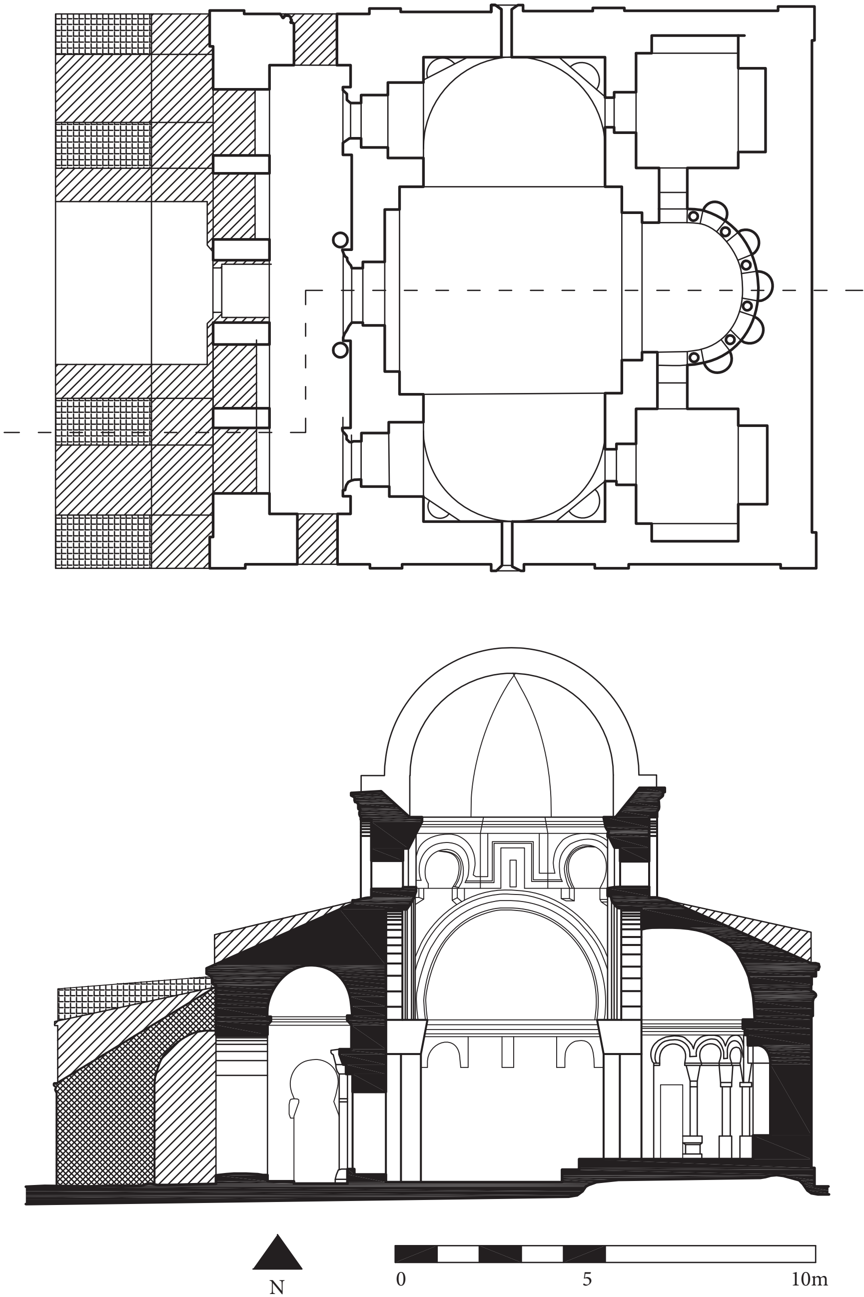

Fig. 3.3.21 Plan and section of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ
Source: Redrawn by S. Kayasü after Guyer.

Fig. 3.3.22 Apse of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ

church recalls the transverse-hall churches of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ and Mor Gabriel. However, with the new restorations in the church, some parts of the façade have become newly visible, and show that the church differs considerably from both its surviving contemporaries and predecessors. There are decorated columns engaged to the piers of the portico. The design of the church seems like an experiment based on older formulae, influenced perhaps also by the triconch churches of Armenia.[210] The squinches of the church are neatly done with mouldings, and most probably were original parts of the design. Although this architectural feature has strong Persian associations, its common use in Armenia

[210] Donabèdian and Thierry, *Les arts arméniens.*

Fig. 3.3.23 Cloister vault of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ

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in over thirty domed churches dating to the sixth and seventh centuries[211] may support a link with Armenian architecture.

On the exterior, the cloister vault is encapsulated in a drum that has two rows of niches, the upper one being a twentieth-century addition (Fig. 3.3.20). The lower niches strongly recall another eighth-century building, the Audience Hall in the citadel of Amman, which has been dated to 728.[212] This building has similar niches both inside the building and on the façade. Strong Sasanian influences have been suggested for this building,[213] which may also be suggested for the Church of Yoldath Aloho.

The apse is not the only decorated part of the church, most of the architectural elements—the niches, doors, and windows—are all emphasized with decoration of the eighth-century style described above in the hall-type churches. The style of the sculpture of this church and of the others mentioned above supports the idea of a local atelier of skilled stonemasons. There is also textual evidence to support such a hypothesis. The Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ represents the culmination of the eighth-century architecture of Ṭur ʿAbdin in the combination of innovative ideas with local traditions. There is no real parallel to it and yet is it not foreign to the region.

[211] F. Antablin, 'The Squinch in Armenian Architecture in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries', *Revue des études Arméniennes* 18 (1984): 503–13; 504–7.

[212] K. A. C. Creswell and J. W. Allan, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, Cairo, 1989, 169–73.

[213] https://archnet.org/sites/3545. See the same site for some photographs.

4
Epilogue

By considering the plans, architectural decoration, building technologies, patrons, and builders of the churches in Northern Mesopotamia, together with their physical contexts and historical accounts, I have tried to give a fuller picture of the church architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, a region which was ethnically diverse and a stage for Christological disputes. Building a church here was much more than a construction project. This is especially visible in the hagiographic tradition where as a result of the changing Christological positions and the new Muslim rulers, we see the utilization of narratives of church building or destruction.[1] In my analysis of the churches, I have discussed the dedications, locations, monumentality, and the choice of certain types of plans, where relevant, to show they often result from deliberate choices in response to certain situations.

The region is usually studied partially. This fragmentation is related to the sources, written from a Greek or Syriac perspective, or greater importance has been attributed to some localities, for example Edessa[2] or Ṭur ʿAbdin. In addition, there has usually been an anachronistic approach in the studies of the region's architecture. In the period on which we have focused, that is between the fourth and eighth centuries, Northern Mesopotamia went from being a frontier region between the Byzantine and Persian Empires to being part of the Caliphate. In this Epilogue, by organizing the conclusions under the time frames of before and after the Arab conquest, I discuss plan types, building materials and techniques, decoration, inscriptions, builders, and patronage. Here, I aim to present a more holistic view of the region, analysing the urban and the rural together, and presenting the changes the conquest brought and the continuities that were prominent in church architecture.

The material evidence for the building/rebuilding of churches in the cities for the period after the conquest is almost non-existent. However, material evidence from elsewhere, especially from Syria, as well as written sources allow us to draw some ideas. Unlike the limited evidence from the cities, we have considerable building/rebuilding of churches and monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdin in this period. In Chapter 3, which concentrated on Ṭur ʿAbdin, although I have paid attention to

[1] See Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis' for the discussion of the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives.

[2] Taylor argued that although Edessa played an important role in the spread of Christianity in this region, it was part of a larger movement. As the evidence from other cities, especially Nisibis, shows, the whole region must be considered (Taylor, 'The Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia,' See the Introduction of this book).

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the chronology, my focus has been on the context. Here, my aim is to draw attention to the continuities and changes, and question whether one could talk about a church architecture specific to the Syrian Orthodox after the Arab conquest.

4.1 Before the Arab Conquest

Wars and doctrinal disputes, which resulted in persecution, had a negative impact on the region.[3] Yet the evidence shows that Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia was a wealthy region with notable building activity, in fact enjoying the dynamism that resulted from being a frontier region. The cities were established on Hellenistic foundations or were newly built. They were strongly fortified and were provided with water supplies, large cisterns, aqueducts, baths, shops, *tetrapyla*, markets, places for trade fairs, *horrea*, *praetoria*, *xenodocheia*, and impressive *necropoleis*, especially in Dara whose public ossuary is without parallel. When discussing individual cities, I have also mentioned the settlements around them, which have been little studied.

Both archaeological and textual evidence suggests that rural Northern Mesopotamia was densely settled before the Arab conquest.[4] We have seen that especially the environs of Edessa and Constantia (which was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 and Section 2.7.2) have great potential for archaeology. The focus of this book has been on churches. Therefore, fortresses have not been included, except for those that have churches, like Kale-i Zerzevan. For monasteries in other parts of Northern Mesopotamia, we usually have documentary evidence mentioning the name of the monastery and, in some cases, very limited architectural remains.[5]

Ṭur ʿAbdin was a refuge for miaphysite monks, and remarkable monasteries with distinctive architecture and decoration were built in this region. The main monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin continue to be inhabited. Thus it is difficult to determine the physical properties of a Late Antique monastery. However, as we argued, they were large complexes even in the sixth century. The two largest monasteries today are the seats of the bishops of Ṭur ʿAbdin (Mor Gabriel) and Mardin (Dayr al-Zaʿfaran). Over the centuries they have grown even larger. The villages of the region have gone through distinctive rebuilding and it is difficult to establish with any certainty what an ancient village looked like. However, I have presented some examples in Chapter 3 that might give an idea.

[3] For an example depicting Amida miserable in the sixth century, see S. Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1990), which discusses the region from the perspective of John of Ephesus.

[4] See the Introduction of this book for the surveys in the region.

[5] See especially Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.2, 2.5.4, and 2.7.2.

4.1.1 Church Plans

The cathedral at Nisibis, a five-aisled basilica built in 313–320, is the earliest evidence of church architecture in the region. It is comparable in scale to monumental fourth-century churches of the Empire. The church at Harran and the probable church in the place of the Great Mosque of Amida were reconstructed as basilicas based on limited archaeology. Of the basilicas in Edessa, we have no archaeological evidence, with the exception of reused columns in the mosques, but a typical Syrian-type basilica was recorded by Bell in Martyropolis, dated variously to the fifth or sixth centuries. Thus basilicas, which represent the most common church type in the Empire, were popular also in the region.

The aisled-tetraconch church at Amida shows that the region was up to date concerning plan types that were unusual and monumental. This type of church, which was used throughout the Empire, was associated with both cathedrals and Chalcedonians. The uncovering of rural examples renders the first association less possible and the latter association is difficult to ascertain, given that churches could change hands and that occasionally both denominations could be present in the same church. The octagon at Constantia is another monumental undertaking, which shares the ambulatory design and the long eastern end with the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. It has been considered as a part of the Justinianic building programme.

The cathedral at Dara was probably a domed basilica, linked with Isauria and Constantinople. As our discussion on Hagia Sophia in Edessa has shown, it is difficult to reconstruct this building but it was certainly a domed church, for whose plan alternatives have been offered. The centralized domed churches in the region, although all are reconstructions, seem to have been part of the Justinianic building programme of domed churches, which became his signature, so to speak. The Church of Yoldath Aloho at Martyropolis is of a transitional type before the cross-domed churches.

Although we find similar examples of each plan that we mentioned in the relevant sections, some surviving evidence shows that they also had some peculiarities, such as an octagon and a large circle coming together in the so-called Octagon in Constantia, the unusual piers and apse side rooms in the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Martyropolis, and the foundation level of the Dara cathedral. They may be regarded as local responses to known formulae. The local touches are especially evident when the buildings are considered beyond their plan types. The use of basalt in the Octagon, the classical sculpture of the aisled-tetraconch at Amida, and the decoration of the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Martyropolis, are remarkable.

The archaeological evidence for rural settlements and churches before the Arab conquest is limited in Northern Mesopotamia. The only settlement that has survived to a considerable degree is Kale-i Zerzevan near Amida, which was a

military settlement. Its church is partially standing. In Norhut, we also have a significant church building standing. The church recently excavated in Gola is remarkable for its bema and a wall dividing the male and female. These churches are almost identical to the Limestone Massif churches. Archaeological evidence for monasteries outside of Ṭur ʿAbdin is scattered. Around Constantia and Edessa, we find buildings and other ruins which point to monastic foundations. Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa was regarded as the prototype of the transverse-hall-type churches. However, the distribution of the type between Apamea and Mesopotamia may point to sources other than Edessa. Regardless, as a plan type, transverse-hall-type churches are quintessential for the church architecture of the monasteries of Ṭur ʿAbdin. Only in Ṭur ʿAbdin can a church type be associated with a monastic church.

For this reason, it is even more exceptional that a church of this type was built on a monumental scale to the south of Dara, almost on the battlefield. It is uncertain that it was a monastery but probably its choice of plan was deliberate. Anastasius, who also adorned Mor Gabriel Monastery with mosaics and *opus sectile*, may have employed this local church type. The Greek inscription on the church at Ambar shows the interaction between Greek patrons or builders and the local forms. The main church of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran can be considered as another example of interaction between the Greek and Syrian traditions. Here we find an innovative way of bringing some distinct features together. While the plan has a transversal axis created by conches on the north and south walls, like the other monastic churches of the region, the church is central with a cross-vault. It has a high apse archivolt as in the village churches. It is decorated with impressive sculpture, which has parallels with the cities of the region, such as Dara, Amida, and Resafa in Syria. The exquisite and abundant decoration in the church may indicate a powerful patron who was not from the region as the Greek inscriptions (although limited to alphas and omegas) may signal.

As for the period before the Arab conquest, our evidence from Ṭur ʿAbdin comes mostly, although not exclusively, from the monasteries. This is most probably a result of survival, and thus does not mean that monasteries were built in the period before the Arab conquest and that villages were later. The Church of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ can safely be dated to the sixth century but the churches in other villages have gone through a series of restorations, the most extensive ones being in the last twenty years. A considerable number of them have eighth-century phases. In some cases, there are parts that may suggest that they were built on earlier buildings. However, it is not possible to say if they were earlier churches or Roman structures. While monks were marking the landscape by turning to tombs, caves, and mountains, they most probably utilized ancient buildings. This remains to be studied in detail.

4.1.2 Building Materials and Techniques

The Late Antique church architecture of the region can be characterized as skilfully built stone architecture.[6] Local limestone, which is easy to carve, was the main building material in the region. However, one should not rule out the possibility that easily reparable mudbrick was also used.[7] Limestone was the perfect material for the elaborate architectural sculpture that we find there. There are many ancient limestone quarries surviving in Northern Mesopotamia.[8] Basalt is the second type of stone that was used. It was extracted from the flanks of the volcanic mountain of Karacadağ, located almost in the middle of our region, and was extensively used in the vicinity of this mountain, especially in the cities of Amida and Constantia. The Octagon in Constantia is built of basalt, and in the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Amida, there are courses of basalt. The basalt acanthus capital found at Constantia shows that even though it is difficult to carve basalt, the masons continued the tradition of carving fleshy leaves with this material. Brick, which was rare in Syria, Cilicia, and Armenia, was widely used in Northern Mesopotamia, both in the walls and vaults, usually alternating with stone. The earliest surviving evidence is found in the apse semi-dome of the Nisibis baptistery, dating to 359. Brick, which is a light material, was used extensively for vaults starting in the sixth century. There have been no excavation reports or any work on the late antique bricks of the region.[9]

[6] In Ṭur ʿAbdin, churches and monasteries are the best-preserved structures. This may result from the fact that they were built strongly in the first place and, compared to houses, went through fewer changes. The secular structure that has survived in Ḥāḥ supports the possibility that there were once other structures which were also built of stone but which have not survived. The architecture of the traditional village houses is also of stone, which is readily available, also as spolia.

[7] Stuart Blaylock told me that at Gre Amer and Tille, just to the north of our region, one can find both stone and mudbrick used in the same building. I thank him for this information. Although we do not have archaeological evidence (which can only come from excavation in the case of mudbrick) for the use of mudbrick in Ṭur ʿAbdin, the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives mentions it. According to the *Life*, Simeon had to build the Church of Mor Theodore three times. The first time he built it out of clay and mudbrick and it was destroyed by Nestorians. The second time, he built it from stones and clay and it was destroyed by an earthquake. The third time he built it from large-cut stones and lime mortar, and put on top of it a 'beam of wood and timber' (*Life* of Simeon of the Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §21). Note also the mudbrick transverse-hall-type church at Tell Bia, mentioned in Section 3.3.2 on transverse-hall-type churches.

[8] The most significant quarry in the region is the one to the west of Dara, which was exploited for the building of the city. It was then used as the necropolis of the city. Other quarries near Constantia, such as Cevri (Gürpınar), Cinaz, and Yüceler, were also used as necropoleis (Kürkçüoğlu and Karahan Kara, *Adım Adım Viranşehir*, 21, 22, and 26). There are remains of another ancient quarry, close to Beyburcu in the vicinity of Birtha (Birecik). For buildings situated in remote locations, such as Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa and the monastery at Çardak, the stone was quarried simply from the lower levels of the hills on which these buildings are located. Nicholson suggested that a quarry to the east of Dara was used either as a source of stone for a tower at that location, which had an important view, or as a source for the making of mortar or stucco (Nicholson, 'Two Notes', 667).

[9] Bell records that the bricks of the arcades of Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, which are most probably from the eighth century, measure 0.41 x 0.41 x 0.3 metres (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 87,

Amongst the various techniques used for building, some, such as those found at Senemağara in the Tektek Mountains, the baptistery in Nisibis, and Keloşk Kale near Birtha, show parallels with Northern Syria; for example, with the techniques at Sitt-er-Rum, where we find the vertical use of large ashlar blocks. Senemağara and Keloşk Kale have flat slabs in the ceilings (of buildings whose function we cannot determine), similar to those at Qalb Lozeh and Qalʿat Semʿan in Syria. The pure ashlar construction of Syria (*opus isodomum*) can be seen in the remains around Edessa and in the Tektek Mountains. In most buildings of the region, we find neatly cut ashlar facing on a mortared rubble core (*opus mixtum*).[10] This technique is seen, not only in urban churches, but also in most of the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin. We also see the use of ashlar masonry together and contemporaneously with mortared squared-stone masonry, as in Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, where the apse is built of ashlar masonry and the outer walls with mortared squared-stone masonry. Later, piers made of bricks, alternating with roughly coursed small stones were added to this church. In some other hall-type churches, the piers which carried the load of the vault were of pure large ashlar stone.

Some churches must have been covered with timber roofs. Local oak was short and poplar was weak. Thus, for the roof of some churches, most probably for the original roof of Mor Sobo, the roof of the basilica at Martyropolis, the domes of the Octagon, and the aisled-tetraconch churches, the timber must have been imported. Marble was another material that was probably imported. There are fragments of marble reused in the destroyed parts of the *opus sectile* pavement in the sanctuary of the main church of Mor Gabriel Monastery. The *opus sectile* pavement is also of black, red, and white marble. It was claimed that the throne (now missing) of the same church was carved from a block of marble. The church of St. John the Baptist at Edessa was described as having wonderful columns of red marble.

Some of the columns of the Great Mosque of Harran were described by Lloyd and Brice as having columns 'of a fine-textured pink marble, which can apparently be obtained in the Tektek Dagh'.[11] The material described as pink marble is probably a polished limestone, which resembles marble. This material can also

fn. 30). Leroy recorded that the bricks of the Octagon at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, a sixth-century building, are 40 cm in width (Leroy, 'Deux baptistères', 2). The sixth-century bricks in Constantinople measure typically 36. 9 cm square by 4.2 cm thick: J. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5. Given the lack of any detailed study on the dimensions of the bricks, it is difficult to differentiate between sixth- and eighth-century bricks in Northern Mesopotamia based on their dimensions, which seem to be very close. For the sixth century, the most notable examples for building with brick are the vaults of the galleries and the gates of the walls at Amida (Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, pl. 29) and the vault of the hall near the cathedral at Dara. In the vaults of the horreum at Dara, there are also bricks alternating with stone.

[10] For an overview of the techniques, J. B. Ward-Perkins, 'Notes on the Structure and Methods of Early Byzantine Architecture', in *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, Second Report*, ed. D. Talbot Rice (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1958), 52–104.

[11] Lloyd and Brice, 'Harran', 87.

be found in the window mullions and column capitals in Constantia (which are scattered in the private gardens), and also in a reliquary in the Mardin Museum. The reused column shafts in the Great Mosque of Urfa, which are reddish in colour, similar column shafts in the Cercis Peygamber Camii (formerly the medieval Church of St. George) in Edessa, the mullions of the aisled-tetraconch in Amida (now reused as chancel posts), and reliquaries in the Church of Mor Yaʿqub, attached to the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Amida are probably all polished limestone of various colours that resemble marble when polished.[12] One of its sources in Turkey is the Bitlis Massif,[13] just to the north-east of our region.

Spoliation in the churches and monasteries of the region requires detailed research. In some cases, such as the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Edessa, we can see that the monastery made use of spolia from an ancient temple.[14] Texts also mention the utilization of temples. The *Life* of Bishop Rabbula of Edessa tells us that Rabbula ordered four pagan temples in Edessa to be destroyed, and utilized the material for the building of a place of refuge, a hostel for women.[15] As we mentioned, in some churches, there are clear signs of reused material, especially in the piers and in the foundation levels.[16] Reuse of material is more traceable in the period after the Arab conquest.

4.1.3 Decoration

In an influential article, Mundell Mango notes that '. . . the classical tradition in art and architecture may not, at first glance, appear a promising subject of discussion for Northern Mesopotamia, whose history and culture may lead one to expect a dominant oriental legacy'[17] and then shows the deeply rooted and unique character of the classical tradition in this region. Given the fact that by the sixth century the classical motifs of architectural sculpture had been mostly abandoned, even in Constantinople, the continued use of the classical style in architectural sculpture, both in the urban and rural parts of Northern Mesopotamia, is noteworthy. This preference in these cities, which were located on the frontier, may

[12] N. Herzand and M. Waelkens, eds., *Classical Marble: Geochemistry, Technology, Trade* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1988), 7.

[13] R. Brinkmann, *Geology of Turkey* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1976), 158.

[14] Deichmann and Peschlow, *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstatten*, 55.

[15] Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, vol. II, 385.

[16] In Armenia, Roman building fragments were reused in the foundations of early churches. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 269. The same phenomenon might be the case in the Church of Yoldath Alaho at Ḥāḥ where we see considerably large blocks in the lower courses. Large blocks (about 2 metres wide) are also visible in the church of the Monastery of Mor Loʿzoor at Ḥabsenas.

[17] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 115. She discusses the classical tradition in the region in four 'waves'.

have been seen as a result of a desire to establish a connection with the Mediterranean centre—the heart of classical culture.

The earliest example of the classical style in Christian architectural sculpture in the region is in the fourth-century baptistery at Nisibis, where we find relations with Palmyra. Some architectural fragments found in Edessa also suggest an early date. It has been argued that the sculpture in the basilica at Martyropolis is neatly carved so it must have been earlier; but based also on the same sculpture, it was argued that the basilica was from the sixth century. Since our information is only from Bell's pictures, it is difficult to reach a conclusion on that matter. The spolia used in the Great Mosque of Amida, the loose architectural fragments from Dara, the sculpture in the churches of Yoldath Aloho at Amida, Mor Ḥananyo at Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, and Mor Sobo at Ḥāḥ, and the pilasters in the main church of Mor Yaʿqub Monastery at Ṣālaḥ have similar sculpture, although slightly cruder and flatter. Figure 3.3.19 shows the gradual change in the sculpture of the region, including the period after the Arab conquest.

Although usually conservative, the sculpture of the region sometimes deviated from classical forms, reflecting influences from the surrounding traditions and

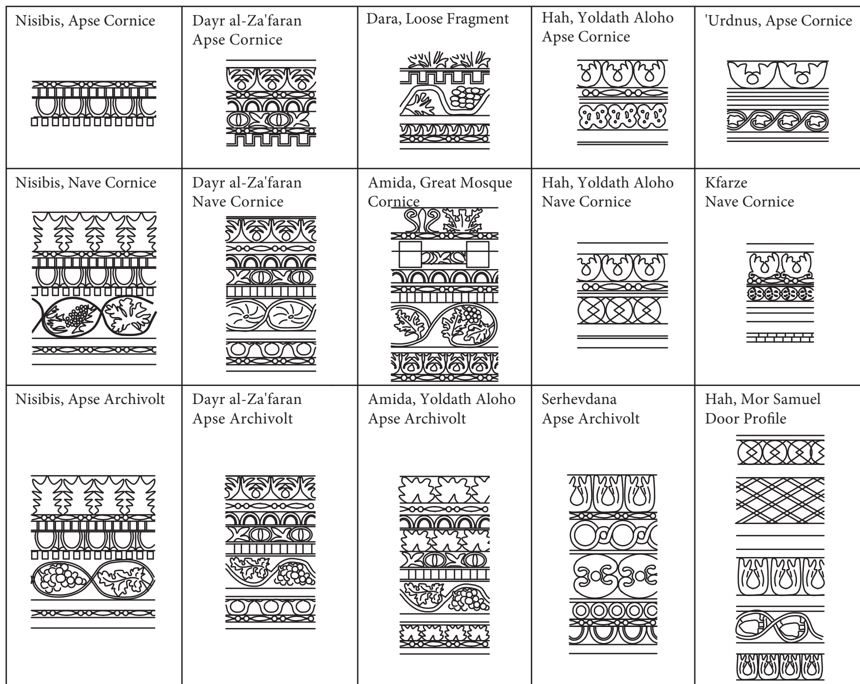

Fig. 4.1 Table illustrating the evolution of the sculpture in the region, from the fourth to the eighth centuries

maybe imported workshops. Similarities with those in Syria, Armenia, Cilicia, and Constantinople have been discussed where relevant. Similarities with Sasanian architectural decoration, especially in the column shafts reused at the Diyarbakır Great Mosque, and the sculpture of the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Martyropolis, are also evident (although they have rare parallels also in Byzantium). There was a frequent traffic of artisans between the Empires[18] and this may have resulted in an interweaving of styles. The architectural sculpture on the archway leading to a large funerary chamber at the necropolis of Dara is another distinctive example that shows the influence of life-sized Sasanian rock reliefs.

In Northern Mesopotamia, we find decorated archivolts, doorways, roof lines, gables, column shafts, and a variety of capitals. The *cyma recta* (the s curve) was commonly found on rooflines and gables. The cavetto, torus, astragal, scotia, fillet, fascia, and corona, with a variety of classical ornaments, such as egg and dart, flutes, scrolls, and bead and reel were found in the archivolts and in some doorways. The Corinthian was the most common type of capital used in late antique Northern Mesopotamia, reflecting the attachment to classical forms. The acanthus was widely used in the capitals and we find it in various versions, including fine toothed, mask, and uncut acanthus.[19] We also find simple engaged column capitals, bowl-shaped capitals,[20] two-zone capitals,[21] plainly executed Ionic, and composite basalt capitals from Constantia.

For the period before the Arab conquest, Mundell Mango writes, 'The sculpture repertory is on the whole distinct in style and content from that of Syria.'[22] On the other hand, Naccache notes that one can detect parallels. Dentils and meanders as well as bead and reel are identical. Similar acanthus leaves can be found in Qalb

[18] Theophylact Simocatta records that Justinian sent artisans to work on the palace of Khusrow I in Ctesiphon (Theophylact Simocatta, 5.vi.10). There are Greek masons' marks at Shapur I's palace of Bishapur; see N. G. Garsoian, 'Byzantium and the Sassanians' in *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 568–92, 579, mentioned in: A. Comfort, 'Roads on the Frontier', 179.

[19] Capitals with acanthus leaves are found in the Nisibis baptistery, Martyropolis basilica, the churches of Mor Cosmas and Yoldath Aloho at Amida, Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, and Deir Metinan; reused capitals in the Great Mosque of Amida; loose capitals in Dara; and capitals in the Şanlıurfa Museum. A stylized version of the acanthus capital in the eighth century can be found in Gündükshükro (see Hollerweger, *Turabdin*, photograph, 309), in Kfarze, and ʿUrdnus. Capitals with uncut acanthus leaves (sometimes called unworked, smooth acanthus, or *vollblatt* in German) are represented by a group of free-standing capitals in the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Urfa. This type of capital can also be found in the so-called 'archaeological park' at Nisibis. The capitals at Sare, a village close to Constantia, and those around the octagon in Constantia and at Qasr el-Banat in the Tektek Mountains, also have uncut acanthus leaves. In the Şanlıurfa Museum, there are capitals with wind-blown acanthus, a style also found at Qalʿat Semʿan.

[20] They are either with basket weave or with other decorations, and are found in Dara, in the Mardin Museum, and in Nisibis.

[21] A prominent example is from the East Syrian monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, now in Mor Gabriel Monastery (see Hollerweger, *Turabdin*, photograph, 75, Fig. 2.2.12 in this book). It is significant for its Sasanian features and figural decoration with a bust. Another capital with a bust that also has a Syriac inscription is located in the Şanlıurfa Museum.

[22] Mundell Mango, 'The Continuity of the Classical Tradition', 122.

Lozeh and Qalʿat Semʿan.[23] However, it has been argued that the distinctive sculpture of Qalʿat Semʿan, which does not seem to be in the tradition of the Limestone Massif,[24] has, amongst others, Mesopotamian links. The sixth-century sculpture in Northern Mesopotamia has parallels with the repertoire of the sculpture in the archivolt of the centralized building at Resafa, and in the archivolt of Qalb Lozeh.[25] However, the sculpture in Northern Mesopotamia is more deeply carved. The sculpture in Senemağara is more similar to Limestone Massif churches.[26] The granulations on the sculpture at Martyropolis are alike to those of the churches in Darqita and Babisqa in Syria.[27] Vases and amphorae in the decorations are also almost identical to examples in the Limestone Massif.[28]

Another similarity with the decoration in Syria is the use of the niches. As Biscop and Sodini showed in the apses of many churches in Northern Syria there were colonnades[29] similar to those of the sixth-century churches of the monasteries of Mar Abraham Kashkar and Dayro d-Kfone, and later the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ. They had a similar shell motif in their conches. However, an important difference is that the examples in Syria are in the outer wall of the apse. Although not in the apse, the niches of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran are also noteworthy.[30] Amida and Edessa, two old cities of the region, almost certainly had an influence on the architecture of their respective hinterlands; their workshops probably operated not only in the nearby countryside but also in comparatively distant places like Resafa.[31] Tchalenko suggested that the same sculptors worked at the church of Basufan in the Limestone Massif and at Dayr al-Zaʿfaran.[32]

Animal depictions are common in the decorations. The scroll with animals on the upper façade of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran is common in late antique art, however it is

[23] Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, vol. I, 197.

[24] Strube, *Baudekoration*, vol. II, 236.

[25] For Qalb Lozeh, see Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, II, CCCXXVI; for Resafa, Brands, *Die Bauornamentik*, pl. 64d.

[26] For example, in Sergible, the door of the church of the south monastery: Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, CXXXII.

[27] Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, vol. I, 157, and Plates XXXVII and XIX.

[28] For Syrian vases: Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, vol. I, 249. There are ten bosses on the interior cornice of the Church of Mor Ḥananyo at Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, of which two are in the shape of amphorae and the others in plaited baskets. The shape of the baskets and the presence of fruits are similar to the examples at Seleucia Pieria. In terms of the tall shape and the diagonal weaving, the baskets in the Church of Mor Ḥananyo are stylistically similar to the basket attached to a capital excavated in Daphne, Antioch. As for the amphorae, a similar but smaller type can be found in the frieze of the Amida Great Mosque. There are vases in the doorway decorations of the baptistery of Nisibis, and amphorae in the apse archivolts of Deir Metinan and Dayr al-Zaʿfaran. The latter two are very similar to the amphorae at Resafa.

[29] J. L. Biscop and J. P. Sodini, 'Qal'at Sem'an et les chevets à colonnes de Syrie du Nord', *Syria* 61/3–4 (1984): 267–330.

[30] Described in Section 3.3.2.3. We find niches with shell motifs also in Akkese church: Keser-Kayaalp, 'A Newly Discovered Rock-cut Complex'. In terms of the abundance of niches in a single church, Coptic churches are significant: M. Capuani, *Christian Egypt: Coptic Art and Monuments through Two Millennia* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. 2002), 203.

[31] Mundell, 'The Sixth-century Sculpture'; Brands, *Die Bauornamentik*, 118.

[32] Tchalenko, *Villages Antiques*, vol. I, 231.

considered rare in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria. We find birds decorating the pilasters of the entrance to the sanctuary of the Monastery of Mar Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ. The dolphins on the doorway of the *bēth qadishe* of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, two peacocks in the frieze of the Amida Great Mosque, a lion head under the cross on the frieze at Mar Yaʿqub at Ṣalaḥ, two frontal lion heads between the windows on the west façade of Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze, and the birds on the façade of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ are other examples of animal figures.[33]

Crosses are found in the apse conches of both the hall-type churches and the *bēth ṣlawotho*. Large crosses in the apses are often seen as indicators of iconoclasm.[34] It is thought that crosses replaced earlier figural designs during the period of iconoclasm. However, the use of crosses in Northern Mesopotamia had probably nothing to do with iconoclasm, although most are contemporary with the period of Byzantine iconoclasm. Three of them; those in the churches of Mor Sobo at Ḥaḥ, Mar Abraham, and the Akkese church, can be dated to the sixth century. It has been argued that there was probably a continuation of the general preference for non-figural decoration in the churches of the region.[35] However, many exceptions to this idea have presented themselves, like in the mosaics of Yolbilen and Gola, where we find human and animal figures. This confirms Brock, who, through a survey of textual sources, shows that there was not a relationship between Iconoclasm and miaphysitism, as earlier scholars thought.[36] Another notable piece of evidence is a fragment with the portrait of a bearded male figure, perhaps Christ, which is in the Şanlıurfa Museum.[37]

The wall mosaic at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, covering the barrel vault and lateral lunettes of the central sanctuary of the main church, is the only wall mosaic from the region that is still *in situ*. In fact, few wall mosaics have survived to the east of Constantinople. This decoration, also aniconic, was probably unique in Ṭur ʿAbdin. It was probably an offshoot of the building activities during the foundation of the city of Dara. There is marble floor *opus sectile* in the same space, which

[33] Mor ʿAzozoʾel at Kfarze and Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ are from the eighth century. Animals on these façades are reminiscent of Armenian architecture: Donabèdian and Thierry, *Les arts arméniens*. J. G. Davies, *Medieval Armenian Art and Architecture: The Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar* (London: Pindar Press, 1991).

[34] Ousterhout, 'The Architecture of Iconoclasm', 3–45, 24.

[35] See Mundell, 'Monophysite Church Decoration' for discussion of the non-figural tendency in miaphysite church decoration.

[36] Brock, 'Iconoclasm and the Monophysites', 53–7.

[37] Şanlıurfa Museum, inventory no: 3800. This piece, though, might have come from a Chalcedonian church. The mosaic fragment is about 18 cm to 20 cm with a layer of 9–10 cm-thick mortar. This is a thick layer of mortar for a wall mosaic. It is composed of tesserae of 3–4 mm in the face and tesserae of about 7 mm in the background. The fragment was sold to the museum in 1972 and is believed to have come from a church in Edessa. There is not enough evidence to further contextualize this fragment. It may have been from St. Sophia at Edessa (*c.*525), which from the Syriac *Sogitha* we know was decorated with mosaics. A parallel example is the figure of Christ depicted in the sanctuary apse of the *katholikon* of the Monastery of St. Catherine in Mount Sinai, which dates to the mid-sixth century. In both, the face of Christ has the same triangular form with similar beard shape, hair, eyes, and nose.

we also find in Dara, in a location close to the cathedral and in the Great Mosque of Amida. Wall *opus sectile* has been recorded in the Church of Mor Cosmas at Amida. It shows great similarity with the examples elsewhere in the Empire.

4.1.4 Builders and Patrons

As imperial patronage was at a high level in the region, and workmen and engineers were brought in from elsewhere (especially from Antioch and Isauria), it is impossible to determine whether experiments with the dome, the foundations, and emptying the piers to achieve lighter interiors were local innovations. Although the textual evidence we have is not concerned specifically with the building of churches, we see the organized effort of professionals in building activities. Before the construction of the city of Dara, a *mechanikos* was sent to the region to draw up the plan.[38] Anthemius and Isidorus, the builders of St. Sophia at Constantinople, were supposedly consulted about water control in Dara. Chryses of Alexandria was consulted about the dam at Dara and allegedly came up with the same solution as Justinian.[39]

Bishops were important in the management of the construction works as elsewhere in the Empire and they were powerful people in terms of mobilizing resources.[40] Thomas, the bishop of Amida, was recorded as the chief foreman of the construction works at Dara. He also did the accounting for the construction works.[41] Workmen for the foundation of Dara were brought from all Syria.[42] The Qartmin Trilogy gives the impression that workmen were summoned from the whole Empire to build the monastery, yet they were most probably already in the region for the construction of the city of Dara. Once the skilled workmen were brought to the region, they might have been involved in several different

[38] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, 165.

[39] Procopius depicts Justinian, not only as a great patron but also a brilliant builder, for his contributions both in Edessa and Dara. Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.3.

[40] Constantine's correspondence with Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, and the correspondence of St. Gregory of Nyssa with Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, concerning the construction of 'the most beautiful church in the world' and a martyrium, respectively, illustrate their power (Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 26–8).

[41] Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, 166f. A man called Calliopius was given overall site responsibility such as the supervision of design and engineering, whereas Thomas and the clergy of Amida (who were probably visiting the site infrequently) were entrusted with paying and caring for the labourers and craftsmen (B. Croke, 'Marcellinus on Dara: A Fragment of His Lost "De Temporum Qualitatibus et Positionibus Locorum"', *The Phoenix* 38 (1984): 77–88, 84). He probably did a job similar to that of later *ergolaboi*, serving as an 'intermediary between the client and the workers', receiving and distributing payments, and providing the building materials (Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 48). There were other people at the lower level of supervision at Dara. Cyrus, ʻAdon, and Eutychian were priests who were accustomed to the transaction of business, and Thomas bar ʻAbdiya, second bishop of Dara, was described as 'well versed in business' (Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, 166).

[42] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle*, 90.

projects to make the best use of them. It is highly likely that these projects attracted many Isaurians who were considered good builders.[43] Voluntary labour, especially that of monks, was probably as extensive as was the case elsewhere in the Empire.[44] As for the architects of the churches, we have little information beyond names and places of work.[45]

The refortification of cities and the building of Dara and its later improvement were the main building campaigns in the region, and all resulted in imperial patronage, especially in the reigns of Anastasius and Justinian, for the building of churches.[46] Anastasius, who probably was responsible for the building of the church at Ambar, also started the building of the cathedral of Dara. While he was building Dara, he also adorned the main church of Mor Gabriel with its mosaics and *opus sectile* which are unique in the region. Justinian, on the other hand, might have been responsible for the exquisite sculpture in Dayr al-Zaʿfaran. He probably completed the cathedral at Dara, which was started by Anastasius. He probably also supported the cathedral of Edessa and the Octagon in Constantia. Justinian's patronage was not limited to cities, their churches, and fortresses; his patronage was also extended to monasteries. It is recorded that he restored the monasteries of Delphrachis, Zebinus, Theodotus, John, Sarmathê, Cyrenus, and Begadaeus.[47] Given Justinian's attitude towards miaphysitism, it would be wrong to assume that these monasteries were all Chalcedonian monasteries; as we have discussed, he may in fact have supported Dayr al-Zaʿfaran. Other emperors also contributed to the church architecture of the region. Theodosius II, while founding the city of Martyropolis, may have built its cathedral. The emperor Zeno is credited with the gift of a village to one of the monasteries near Amida.[48] Although not based on any reliable evidence, the Church of St. Thomas in Amida is associated with Heraclius.[49]

[43] Mango, 'Isaurian Builders'.

[44] Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 28. In the erection of the Monastery of John Urtaya Urtoye in Amida, monks were in charge of building (John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 19, 562). On a certain Feast of Epiphany, 12,000 stonemasons were baptized in the Monastery of the Exedra which was on the mountains close to Edessa (Segal, *Edessa*, 191, fn. 6). Segal does not mention his source. This number is implausible but it is interesting that monks are referred to as stonemasons.

[45] According to the Qartmin Trilogy, Theodore and Theodosius, sons of Shufnay, who built the main church of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, were sent by the emperor Anastasius (Qartmin Trilogy LIX). These architects were also alleged to have worked in Dara (Bar Hebraeus, *The Ecclesiastical Chronicle: An English Translation*, trans. D. Wilmshurst (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016), app. xxxii. It is likely that they came to the region for the building of Dara and worked also in the building of Mor Gabriel. Asaph and Addai, mentioned in the *Sogitha*, have usually been interpreted as the architects of the cathedral at Edessa (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3, 'Edessa'). For the architect in the Greek-speaking Late Antique world, see Ousterhout, *Master Builders*, 39–44; Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 81–5.

[46] Some sections of the following paragraphs on the patronage were published in E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Patronage of Churches in the Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia', in *Spaces/Times/Peoples: Patronage and Architectural History*, ed. C. Katipoğlu et al. (Ankara: ODTÜ Basım işliği, 2016), 43–55.

[47] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 5.9.32.

[48] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 19, 558.

[49] See Chapter 2, Section 2.4, 'Amida'.

Bishops, rather than emperors, are mentioned frequently in the chronicles and inscriptions as patrons of churches. Eight bishops who built churches are mentioned in the Chronicle of Edessa. Similarly, the inscriptions from Constantia tell us the names of bishops when recording some construction works.[50] Bishops built either from the church's budget or carried out their own fundraising. Nonnus, the bishop of Amida, allegedly sent his suffragan Thomas to Constantinople to ask for a donation from Emperor Anastasius. The emperor and patriarch gave presents to the church of Amida and a large amount of money to be distributed amongst the poor.[51] Similarly, the Church of the Forty Martyrs at Amida was probably built by Archbishop John.[52]

Another piece of evidence showing the capability of the local bishoprics to sponsor spectacular construction works is the fourth-century baptistery at Nisibis. The inscription on the building records Bishop Volagesos as the person who erected and finished the building. There is no mention of an imperial benefaction. Another significant example from the region is the foundation of the city of Martyropolis by the efforts of bishop Marutha with the patronage of both Byzantine and Persian emperors. Theodosius II gave 'gold, silver, craftsmen, workmen and overseers' and 'many gifts, villages, farms, vineyards and olive groves to churches'. Yazdgard, the emperor of the Persians who had great respect for Marutha, also gave an inscribed gold cup full of gold for building materials.[53]

We also find governors, their relatives, and military officers as the benefactors of ecclesiastical buildings. In 437, a senator donated a large silver table containing seven hundred and twenty pounds of silver to the old church of Edessa.[54] In 441, Anatolius, the *stratelates* (military commander) of Edessa made a coffin of silver, in honour of the bones of Thomas the holy apostle.[55] A certain Roman called Demetrius, who was posted at the castle of Ṭur ʿAbdin to the south-east of the Monastery of Mor Aho, made a benefaction to the monastery in order that a burial vault of hewn stone containing nine arcosolia and a charnel-house with a stone door be built in his memory.[56]

Private patronage was also effective in building ecclesiastical structures in the region. The main motivation for the patrons was to ensure their salvation and perpetuate their names. We know from a fifth-century inscription that a possible church dedicated to the Protomartyr at Constantia was financed from the donation of a fruit-bearing garden,[57] probably by one of the faithful. There were also monasteries built with private patronage in the immediate vicinity of cities. For example, a monastery was built by Sergius in Qlophite (?) (near Amida) with the help of villagers: 'each . . . ran to his house to find something to bestow . . . in

[50] They are mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.7, 'Constantia'.
[51] Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Chronicle, ch. 83.
[52] Chronicle of 819, 4.
[53] Life of Marutha, 63–9.
[54] Chronicle of Edessa, 60.
[55] Chronicle of Edessa, 61.
[56] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 54.
[57] Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien*, no. 4.

proportion to his ability.'[58] Another monastery near Amida was founded by Addai, a former chorepiskopos, who planted a vineyard in it to help the poor by selling wine to Cappadocians.[59] Mare, who was a former cleric and a craftsman, built a monastery 3 miles from a village around Martyropolis (probably *c.*520–540).[60]

An inscription in a mosaic from Kerküşti (between Viranşehir and Kızıltepe), dating to 481/2, records an archimandrite and a dux involved in the construction of a building whose function is not clear. The appearance of the two together has been interpreted as indicating that the building was under the jurisdiction of both military and ecclesiastical circles (maybe a hospice).[61] The *Life* of Yaʿqub of Ṣalaḥ (d. 421) tells us that Yaʿqub's successor Daniel, 'with the vows and tithes mounting up', improved the monastic buildings and acquired many villages.[62] Lazarus, the son of Daniel of Aghlosh (d. 439), travelled far away for fundraising to build a church in his father's name and a house for his bones. With the money he collected after two years, he built a splendid cross (for the relics?) and a temple built of hewn stone.[63]

4.1.5 Language of Inscriptions and Denomination of Churches

The absence of Syriac inscriptions in Edessa after the fourth century has been described as 'a mystery'.[64] However, we have mentioned new finds from the fifth and sixth centuries, found in the floors of tomb chambers in Edessa (some of which are bilingual) and in the new excavations around Constantia.[65] We have only one Syriac inscription in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel from the period before the Arab conquest, dating to 534, which records the monks taking refuge in the monastery.[66] Although scarce, these finds leave room for further discoveries. The scarcity of Syriac inscriptions in the cities of the region does not mean that the Syriac population did not exist in the city, or that Syriac was not used in the cities.[67] One should remember the Syriac literary production in the cities of the

[58] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 106.

[59] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 125f.

[60] John of Ephesus, 'Lives', vol. 17, 135f.

[61] Mango and Mango, 'Inscriptions', 468. Palmer argues that *limitanei* (members of border units in the army) named Constans and Severianus may have founded the village of Bēth Qusṭān and Bēth Sḇirino in Ṭur ʿAbdin. He suggests that such members of the military were in touch with the holy men and may have supported their building projects (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 55).

[62] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 110.

[63] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 47.

[64] Briquel Chatonnet and Desreumax, 'Syriac Inscriptions in Syria'.

[65] See Chapter 2, Section 2.3, 'Edessa', and Section 2.7.2, 'Around Constantia'.

[66] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', 57; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 201 (A.1), 202, fig. 49. Palmer identified this inscription as the earliest Syriac inscription yet found in Ṭur ʿAbdin.

[67] D. G. K. Taylor, 'Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia', in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, ed. J. N. Adams, M. Janse, and S. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 330. Bilingual inscriptions from the necropolis

region, especially in Edessa in this period.[68] It should also be noted that the use of Greek or Syriac did not determine a Chalcedonian or a miaphysite stand. It is telling that the hymn on the cathedral of Edessa was written in Syriac by a Chalcedonian. Greek was not confined to the cities and can be found in the mosaic at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel, in the Kerküşti mosaic, in the close vicinity of cities such as in the tombs west of Edessa, in the main church of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, and in an inscription in the church at Ambar, which has a plan typical of the Syrian Orthodox monasteries, with the exception of the polygonal apse which can be seen as a Constantinopolitan addition to the local transverse-hall-type church.

Although there are passing references regarding which denomination possessed which church, it is not possible to reach a conclusion on the matter. Churches were changing hands and were probably sometimes used by both miaphysites and Chalcedonians.[69] A volume entitled *Les églises en monde syriaque*,[70] published in 2013, sought to tackle the question whether one can talk about a type of church building that is specific to Syriac-speaking communities that would differ from the churches of other communities. The book also asked whether the diversity in church plan types is tied to geography and, if that is the case, whether the churches belonging to different communities in the same region are similar. This is an ambitious agenda when one considers that it deals with a geography that spreads from Mesopotamia to central Asia. It seems it is difficult to answer these questions even for a defined smaller geography like Northern Mesopotamia.[71] It is more

of Edessa testify this. The baptistery at Nisibis is another evidence. There is a Greek inscription dating to 359 on the baptistery. We also find Greek graffiti which probably dates to the fifth or sixth centuries on the same building when the city was under the Persians. There is also a Syriac inscription, probably from the same period, on one of the doorways. These inscriptions are now being studied by A. Palmer. Nisibis was a bilingual city before the Persian conquest. Legal documents were written in both Greek and Syriac, see Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 482.

[68] For scriptoria, see M. Mundell Mango, 'Patrons and Scribes Indicated in Syriac Manuscripts, 411 to 800 AD', *JÖB* 32/3 (1982): 3–12, 4–5.

[69] Chronicle of 1234, 1.224 claims that when the Sasanian shah Khusrow conquered Mesopotamia, he expelled the Romans and gave their churches to miaphysites. However, it is a much later account. Mayer and Allen discuss this issue for Antioch where we have more textual evidence. They argue that in the early sixth century, anti-Chalcedonians possessed most of the churches in the city. Bishops, depending on their factional affiliations, were gaining possession of the churches of the cities. After Justinian, with the establishment of the anti-Chalcedonian clergy, they moved to monasteries, but there were still anti-Chalcedonian communities in the city of Antioch. Mayer and Allen, *Churches of Syrian Antioch*, 205–6.

[70] F. Briquel Chatonnet (ed.), *Les églises syriaques* (Paris: Geuthner, 2012).

[71] However, as shown, parallels with the Limestone Massif are relatively strong, indicating a cultural unity between the two regions. The location or the owners of the churches today do not reveal much about the identity of the churches in Late Antiquity. As Syrian Christians are today the main Christian community surviving in the region, it is thanks to them that some of the Christian heritage that would have otherwise disappeared has survived. The baptistery in Nisibis, now known as the Church of Mor Yaʿqub, and the aisled-tetraconch in Amida, believed by some to be Chalcedonian, are today the only Syrian Orthodox churches active in any of the cities or towns in south-eastern Turkey that date back to

fitting to think of the architecture of this region as a product of a multi-ethnic and multi-denominational society.

On the other hand, we find that some architectural choices were deliberate identity markers. Nowhere, outside of Ṭur ʿAbdin, can one associate a plan type only with monastic churches. The transverse-hall-type plan was so thoroughly associated with the West Syrians that the East Syrians preferred to use hall-type churches for their monasteries, probably with the intention to differentiate themselves.[72] This type of plan was probably intentionally used in Ambar to make a reference to its Syrian origins. It seems that it was after the Arab conquest that we find a more distinct architecture that can be more confidently linked to the Syrian Orthodox in Ṭur ʿAbdin.

4.2 After the Arab Conquest: Continuities and Change

4.2.1 Cities

The archaeological and textual evidence for church building/rebuilding in the cities after the Arab conquest is limited.[73] While discussing the historical context in the Introduction, we mentioned that there seems to be a loose provincial administration until the Abbasids. In fact, while talking about individual churches in the cities, we mentioned that the names of some of them were included in twelfth-century accounts.[74] There was a continuity of the churches after the Arab conquest. Guidetti follows Suliman Bashear in challenging the notion of the sharing of the church or a part of it, which is frequently repeated in the secondary literature.[75] According to that theory, first, Christians would be forced to share a portion of their buildings; then the entire building would be taken from them and the church would be converted or destroyed and replaced by a mosque. Like Bashear, Guidetti argues that, rather than there being a division of the spaces, Muslims were praying in churches. That might be the reason why Muʿawiya, if

the Late Antique period. The Monastery of Mar Awgin (originally an East Syrian monastery) is an active monastery used by West Syrians today. See the quotation from Dionysus Tel-Mahre in the next section, giving further insight to this phenomenon of churches changing hands.

[72] Mundell Mango, 'Deux églises', 67.

[73] While recording the events between 766 and 777, the Syriac chronicle of Zuqnin reports that the Great Church of Amid was restored (Chronicle of Zuqnin, 228). The reliability of Arabic sources is questioned not only because of the chronological distance but also for their utilization of the conquest according to their contemporary needs. Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 13.See also M. Kavak, 'Fetihten Selçuklu Hâkimiyetine kadar Tur Abdin Bölgesi Tarihi', Master's thesis submitted to İstanbul University, 2013.

[74] Guidetti argued that most of the churches in Edessa were destroyed in the twelfth century. In Amida and Constantia, we see the same phenomenon. See Chapter 2, Sections 2.4 and 2.7.

[75] S. Bashear, 'Qibla musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches', *Muslim World* 81/3–4 (1991): 267–82.

indeed he did, restored the cathedral at Edessa after an earthquake in 679.[76] In addition, churches were respected, safeguarded, and visited.[77]

Before the building of large congregational mosques, the Muslim prayer spaces were small oratories. Guidetti notes that this was the case also for Edessa where the congregation mosque was erected only in 825.[78] He proposes that mosques were built in dialogue with the Christian landscape in which they stood, and were not simply substitutes for churches. Guidetti, analysing the evidence in Syria, argues that it was by the ninth century that Muslims started to abolish churches.[79]

The contiguity of the church and the mosque, which Guidetti introduces, seems to have been the case in Amida, Nisibis, and Martyropolis. For Nisibis, Guidetti mentions the mosque that Simeon of the Olives built next to the church.[80] According to his *Life*, Simeon was determined to erect a church inside Nisibis, and for that, a higher authority than the local governor should give permission. Although Baghdad was not yet founded, it was added to Simeon's *Life* that he went to Baghdad to get permission from Caliph al-Ma'mun (who was caliph between 813 and 833 and Simeon died in 734)[81] for his construction projects. The addition to the *Life* of the correspondence with the caliph has been interpreted as a result of anxiety about the possible opposition to the building and renovation of the churches.[82] The claim that he built a *medrese* and a mosque may be related to the same anxious concern to demonstrate good relations.[83] According to Tannous, his building activities that were narrated in his *Life* may have been the original

[76] Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, 11.13. Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, which is the source of this information, is from a much later period, from the twelfth century, and thus it is questionable. As we mentioned regarding Martyropolis, Muslim rulers, like Sasanians, are mentioned as patrons of churches and monasteries. For other examples from Iraq and Egypt, where we find the mention of Muslim rulers patronising churches, see Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval East*, 381.

[77] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 30, 173.

[78] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 31, 48.

[79] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 158.

[80] His *Life* is not reliable. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2, 'Nisibis'.

[81] Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives', 316.

[82] In the Qartmin Trilogy, we read that Gabriel (d. 648), the bishop of Ṭur ʿAbdin, received Umar's written authority 'concerning the statutes and laws and orders and warnings and judgements and observances pertaining to the Christians; to churches and monasteries; and to priests and deacons, that they should not pay the head tax, and to monks that they should be exempt from tribute and that the (use of the) wooden gong would not be banned; and that they might practise the chanting of anthems at the bier of a dead man when he leaves his house to be taken for burial, together with many (other) customs' (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, microfiche, LXXII). Similar anxiety about the contemporary authorities must have given way to this account, written between 819 and *c.*969 (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 14), which pictures tolerance towards Christians. Besides referring to the caliph to indicate his tolerance, there might be an intention to raise the stature of the monastery by simply associating it with important rulers. We see a similar tactic at work in the texts with Byzantine emperors when they are associated anachronistically with some construction projects. For example, the Qartmin Trilogy mentions the emperors Honorius and Arcadius (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 55). The narrative of good relations of Syrian Orthodox with emperors and later with caliphs is a common motif. The latter 'belongs to the genre of documents which sought to delineate the ideal Muslim–Christian treaty and endow it with authority by attributing it to famous Muslim figures'. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 123.

[83] Another account presenting both oppression and tolerance reads as follows: In the first half of the ninth century, the governor of Jazira refused to fulfil the request of the Muslims of Harran, Edessa, and Samosata to destroy newly built churches, responding with the argument that the Christians had not

parts of the text, and during his time he probably did not need any permission.[84] But on the other hand, we find the main interpolation in the text where it describes Simeon's activities in Nisibis. So while he might have freely done some work in Ṭur ʿAbdin, it is unlikely that he built a church, let alone a mosque, in the centre of the city of Nisibis. The account in the *Life* claiming that the Nestorians hindered his building activities in Nisibis many times also indicates that this part of the text is an effort to claim the city as Syrian Orthodox and to support the image that Arabs were on the side of the West Syrians. Elsewhere in Simeon's *Life*, in a detail which may try to picture the peaceful atmosphere in the relatively early days of the Arab rule, we read: 'On account of its glory and its decoration, all the believers were visiting it [the new church] to pray.'[85] If it is correct, this may support Guidetti's argument that religious spaces could be shared.

As for the contiguity of the mosque and the church in Nisibis, the most important evidence is in fact the twelfth-century mosque, which is next to the basilica. In Martyropolis, the medieval mosque was also just to the south of the basilica. These later mosques may have been built on the sites of earlier mosques. In the case of Amida, there is archaeological evidence for the presence of an earlier building. Furthermore, earlier accounts about the location, or even the existence, of the Church of St. Thomas in Amida and its conversion to a mosque are debatable. As I have discussed, one should not rule out the possibility that the location where the current mosque stands, and most probably the first mosque stood, could have been the forum of the city. Guidetti suggests the market place of the city, where there was great public visibility, as the second alternative for the location of early mosques.[86]

Chase Robinson points out that, in the early times of Islamic rule, the discussion amongst the Christians was more about who had the authority over the churches once built—East or West Syrians.[87] The *Life* of Simeon shows the tension between the West and East Syrians over the building of a church in Nisibis. The following account of Dionysius of Tell-Mahre (d. 845) shows the disputes over the ownership of standing buildings with the Melkites, although he notes that in the cities of Mesopotamia, except Edessa and Harran, the churches remained Syrian Orthodox: 'The cathedral churches which had been unjustly confiscated from our people by Heraclius and given to his co-religionists, the Chalcedonians, have continued to languish in their possession until the present day. For at the time when they were conquered and made subjects to the Arabs the cities agreed to terms of surrender, under which each confession had assigned to it

even rebuilt one-tenth of the churches which have been ruined and burnt by the Islamic authorities (Chronicle of 1234, vol. II, 16/11).

[84] Tannous, 'The Life of Simeon of the Olives', 325.

[85] *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §26.

[86] Guidetti, *In the Shadow*, 64.

[87] Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 14.

those temples which were found in its possession. In this way the Orthodox were robbed of the Great Church of Edessa and that of Harran; and this process continued throughout the west as far as Jerusalem. The remaining cities of Mesopotamia escaped this fate, however, because the persecution had its origin in Edessa, as we have shown.'[88]

The material record does not help to determine the situation. Church of Yoldath Aloho at Amida is the only active urban church in the cities of the region, with a portion that dates back to Late Antiquity. It has been partially preserved and recently restored by the Syrian Orthodox community. The baptistery at Nisibis functioned as a church until the recent excavations. In Martyropolis, the Church of Yoldath Aloho and the basilica were partly standing until the twentieth century, as did the piers of the Octagon at Constantia. Constantia probably lost importance after the conquest, as did Dara. In Dara, we are not yet aware of a mosque dating to an early period and only the foundations of the church (the cistern) have survived.

4.2.2 Ṭur ʿAbdin

The main evidence for building/rebuilding churches and monasteries from the first two centuries after the Arab conquest comes from Ṭur ʿAbdin. Bell was the first to suggest a date after the Islamic conquest for four churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin.[89] Of the churches that Bell dated after the Islamic conquest, three are village churches and one is a monastic church. Bell's argument is supported with epigraphic and literary sources.[90] However, the extent of the building activities after the Arab conquest was not limited to them. I have suggested that at least around thirty churches and monasteries that have survived in Ṭur ʿAbdin were built or rebuilt in the late seventh and eighth centuries. This dating is based on inscriptions, textual material, brickwork, existence of *bēth ṣlutho*, and crosses in apse conches, as well as architectural decoration in the apse archivolts and cornices.[91]

There is a considerable lack of inscriptions in Ṭur ʿAbdin dating from the period before the Islamic conquest. This is in sharp contrast to the Limestone Massif in Syria. However, the virtual absence of inscriptions also in monasteries, for which we have more substantial evidence for dating to the sixth century, still

[88] Palmer et al., *The Seventh Century*, 141.

[89] Bell/Mundell Mango, *Churches and Monasteries*, 82–3: Mor Quryaqos at ʿUrdnus, Mor ʿAzozo'el at Kfarze, Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ, and the Monastery of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ.

[90] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, chapter 5, especially 159–65, which are based on the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives. Hage also argues that in the seventh and eighth centuries, there was extensive building. Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche*, 59.

[91] For lists of each category, see Keser-Kayaalp, 'Church Building in the Tur Abdin'.

makes it impossible to determine whether some churches were built from scratch[92] or on existing structures. Even so, we can at least say that churches went through considerable rebuilding in the seventh and eighth centuries. For that matter, without careful archaeological field surveys, we cannot say for certain that villages existed in the region along with the monasteries from early on, or that there were fewer villages and the settlements increased after the region lost its frontier character. On the other hand, based on the argument that there was a prohibition on the building of new churches according to treaties drawn up immediately after the conquest, it is usually assumed that the churches of Ṭur ʿAbdin were built on existing churches or other structures of which little or nothing has survived.[93]

The *Life* of Simeon of the Olives mentions that Simeon renovated the Church of Mor Simon Peter in his village, Ḥabsenas, and 'completed it with every sort of good and fair ornament'. After that, it was named after him, the Church of Simeon of the Olives. The church, as we mentioned, stands today with its sculpture and vault confirming an eighth-century date. However, the story implies that there was an earlier church, which is difficult to trace from the remains. Although mentioning renovation in the case of the village church, for the monastery near the village, the *Life* clearly states that it was newly built: Simeon built 'a small monastery, adorned and beautiful, out of hewn stones. In it, he built a chapel and also a round pillar for recluses.'[94] The village of Ḥāḥ is the best example for following the continuities and changes from the sixth to the eighth centuries. It has at least two structures from the sixth century and three structures that can be dated to the eighth century.[95]

While new monasteries were founded on a small scale,[96] old monasteries, such as Mor Gabriel, received further buildings after the Arab conquest. According to his *Life*, Simeon of the Olives also renewed and adorned the Monastery of Mor Gabriel. He bought fields, farms, houses, shops, mills, gardens, and enclosures for that monastery.[97] Apart from the textual references, there is also an inscription recording building in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel in the eighth century, documenting the building of a portico.[98] Besides, an eighth-century date can be suggested for the Dome of the Egyptians, a burial chamber (*bēth qadishe*) in the monastery, based on similar brickwork that we see in the other hall-type churches

[92] In some other churches and monasteries, we can argue for building from scratch in the seventh and eighth centuries. This is especially the case in the tiny churches and monasteries, see the Church of Yoldath Aloho in Serhevdana and the monasteries in Ḥāḥ in Chapter 3, 'Ṭur ʿAbdin'.

[93] Palmer, 'La Montagne', 214, fn. 203; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 186.

[94] *Life*, of Simeon of the Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §44.

[95] See the Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ in Section 3.3.2.7. It may be built on an earlier church. Or it may in fact have been built on an earlier Roman foundation. This possibility should be considered for most of the churches in the region.

[96] It was the case also for Egypt in that period. See A. Papaconstantinou, 'Between Umma and Dhimma: The Christians of the Middle East under the Umayyads', *AI* 42 (2008): 149–50.

[97] Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 175.

[98] Palmer, 'Corpus of Inscriptions', C1.

that can be dated to the eighth century. The eighth-century inscriptions in the Church of Mor Yaʿqub at Ṣālaḥ also confirm extensive rebuilding in the monasteries.[99]

As we have mentioned, two church plan types predominated in Ṭur ʿAbdin. Both types existed before and after the Arab conquest. All transverse-hall-type churches are monastic and this continued to be the case after the Arab conquest, although the sizes of churches, like the scales of the monasteries, were reduced. Both types showed variations in terms of their eastern arrangement, narthex, vaulting, and decoration. The Church of Yoldath Aloho in Ḥāḥ can be considered as a skilful interpretation of the transverse type.

4.2.3 Decoration

Post-Arab conquest church decoration has survived exclusively in the rural context, most of it being from the eighth-century hall-type churches in Ṭur ʿAbdin. The sculpture is concentrated on the apse archivolts, and is like an interpretation of the earlier tradition (See Fig. 4.1 for the evolution of sculpture in the region). Ousterhout calls it 'bands of desiccated classical motifs'.[100] In fact, the eighth-century sculpture seems to recall more of the sixth-century sculpture in Limestone Massif because of the abstraction of forms, but it is difficult to find an exact parallel.[101] The conches on the façade of the eighth-century Church of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ are similar to the sixth-century Syrian examples, but are also similar to the early Islamic building in the Amman citadel. In the hall-type churches, another significant form of sculpture is the crosses in the apse conches of the sanctuaries and *bēth ṣlutho*. This feature is a continuation of an earlier tradition which we find in the sixth-century churches of Mor Sobo at Ḥaḥ, Mar Abraham, and the Akkese church.

4.2.4 Builders and Patrons

According to the *Life* of Simeon, masons and builders from Ṭur ʿAbdin are recorded to have worked in the castle of Ṭur ʿAbdin in 683/4 (400 men) and in the Church of St. Theodore at Nisibis (300 men).[102] Although we have mentioned

[99] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 206–8, B 1–8. There are many others also in the hall-type churches. Palmer says '. . . suddenly, in the eighth century, a large number of inscriptions, mostly building records, appear in the region'. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 204, and we should note that they continued until the twelfth century, although reduced in number: see the list in: Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 195.

[100] Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 280.

[101] Plaiting exists in Baqirha in Syria. Naccache, *Le décor des églises*, CXLI.

[102] *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, trans. J. Tannous, §8, §26; Brock, 'The Fenqitho of the Monastery', 176.

the problems in his *Life*, it is notable that there was reference to their large numbers. The skill of the Northern Mesopotamian masons was recognized further afield. The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* records that craftsmen from the whole of the Jazira were sent to rebuild Melitene in 760–761.[103] Herzfeld argued that both stone-masons and bricklayers from Amida worked in the construction of the Islamic palace of Mshatta in Jordan (*c.*743).[104] Similarly, in the Islamic foundation of Anjar, workmen from Northern Mesopotamia were employed. An inscription (dating to 714/5) in the quarry near the village of Kāmed in the Beqʿa, from which the dressed stones used at Anjar come, tells us that the quarry was opened by masons from Northern Mesopotamia.[105] Masons from the region may have worked in Damascus Great Mosque[106] and in the foundation of ar-Rafiqa.[107] Like today, and as in the period before the Arab conquest, priests and monks were engaged with building. The inscription on the *bēth ṣlutho* of the Church of Mor Addai in Heshterek, dating to 771/2, says it was raised by Habib, who we understand was a priest.[108] As for the building techniques, we see continuities but also the impact of Sasanian techniques, perhaps resulting from the fact that Umayyads merged the eastern and western techniques, especially in the vaulting.[109] This merge may have inspired the unusual vault of Yoldath Aloho at Ḥāḥ.

Private patronage gained increasing importance after the Arab conquest. Accounts regarding Athanasius bar Gumoye in Edessa in the late seventh to early eighth century show the increasing power of the local Christian elites in the cities.[110] In the countryside we find villagers from several villages coming together to build a vault.[111] We learn from the *Life* of Theodotus of Amida (d. 698) that the possibly Christian governors of the region patronized monasteries for holy men in the region. Elusṭriya, the governor of Dara (early eighth century), told Theodotus that he could stay in the monastery of his choice without paying taxes.

[103] Chronicle of Zuqnin, 201.

[104] E. Herzfeld, 'The Genesis of Islamic Art and the Problem of Mshatta', in *Early Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. J. Bloom (Aldershot: Routledge, 2002), 7–88, 42, (translation of Herzfeld, Die Genesis der Islamischen Kunst und das Mshattā problem, *Der Islam* 1 (1910): 27–63.

[105] P. Mouterde, 'Inscriptions en syriaque dialectal à Kamed—Beqa', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 22 (1939): 71–106, 81.

[106] F. B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 73, fn. 76.

[107] M. Meinecke, *Patterns of Stylistic Changes in Islamic Architecture: Local Traditions versus Migrating Artists* (New York; London: New York University Press, 1996), 11. Similarities with Ukhaidir may show relations also with that region.

[108] Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 211.

[109] I. Arce, 'Umayyad Building Techniques and the Merging of Roman-Byzantine and Partho-Sassanian Traditions: Continuity and Change', in *Technology in Transition A.D. 300–650*, ed. L. Lavan, E. Zanini, and A. Sarantis (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 491–537, see figure in p. 512 for different forms of cross-ribbed vaulting.

[110] Palmer et al., *The Seventh Century*, 202–4, citing the work of Patriarch Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē as reconstituted from Patriarch Michael the Great's chronography.

[111] There are eight inscriptions in the Monastery of Yaʿqub the Recluse at Ṣalaḥ, dating probably to 753. Cf. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 206–8.

He said that he himself would pay them out of his own private funds for as long as the holy man lived. He later encouraged Theodotus to build a new monastery near that of Mor Abai at Qelleth.[112]

4.2.5 Communal Identity

The account that Simeon's building work in Nisibis was hindered by East Syrians may be telling about the tensions between the Christian communities.[113] The presence of East Syrians in the region in the late eighth- early ninth century is attested by Palmer based on his study of twenty-three Syriac inscriptions in the necropolis of Dara.[114] Mundell Mango suggested that East Syrians and their clergy might have lived in Dara already when it was taken by the Persians in 573[115] but it is equally possible that they settled there after the Arab conquest. These are questions that have yet to be answered. This book has focused more on the West Syrian tradition, although we have mentioned the East Syrian monasteries in Mount Izlo in Section 2.2.3. In this case, we have pointed out the different preferences for church plans as a detectable identity marker between the communities. In addition, the transverse-type plan distinguishes West Syrian monasteries from the other confessions. After the Arab conquest, we find an attachment to certain forms and styles in the architecture of Ṭur ʿAbdin, which can therefore be more easily defined as specifically Syrian Orthodox.[116] This has probably resulted from a desire to create a standard architecture within religious, political, and ethnic boundaries that had completely changed.

The results of a study on the formation of a communal identity amongst West Syrian Christians confirm these observations. It has been argued in that study that by the sixth century, the first outlines of a communal identity amongst West Syrians appeared, mostly relying on defining themselves in opposition to the Chalcedonians and founding a separate ecclesiastical hierarchy. Despite this, there was still a connection with the Byzantine Empire. After the Arab conquest, the miaphysites gradually distanced themselves from the Byzantine Empire and

[112] Palmer, *Life of Theodotus*, 127.4 and 193.1. It is the daughter of Elusṭriya who built the portico of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel and whose patronage was recorded with an inscription (Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 167 and 201). Of the Monastery of Theodotus, only a burial chamber and a few wall remains have survived. For recent photographs, see S. Kabasakal Coutignies, 'Mor Teodute', in *Syriac Architectural Heritage at Risk in Tur ʿAbdin*, ed. E. Keser-Kayaalp (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2021), 181.

[113] To win adherents, both East and West Syrians claimed that Arabs favoured them. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 182.

[114] Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan, 'Recent Research on Dara', 174.

[115] Mundell, 'A Sixth-century Funerary Relief', 226.

[116] Keser-Kayaalp, 'Églises et monastères du Tur Abdin', 285.

defined their tradition as Syrian. This period was identified as a period of re-orientation, necessitated by political developments, and the contacts with Islam. The study has argued that the Syrian Orthodox made efforts to establish a tradition in that period.[117]

Our analysis stops in the eighth century but the study of the church architecture in the region should be extended further, since regions like Ṭur ʿAbdin continued to be predominantly Christian. In the twelfth century, the region flourished, especially detectable in its Artuqid architecture. John, the bishop of Mardin, built and rebuilt many churches and monasteries in that period,[118] and later in the early sixteenth century, Masʿud of Zaz undertook many projects of church building/rebuilding.[119] These periods are especially interesting, as the encounters with Islamic decoration gave way to impressive examples of interaction. The stone architecture with distinctive decoration has continued, especially in Mardin up to this day, borrowing features from the Late Antique tradition in the region.

[117] For a summary: B. ter Haar Romeny with N. Atto, J. van Ginkel, M. Immerzeel, and B. Snelders, 'The Formation of a Communal Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project', *CHRC* 89. 1–3 (2009) 1–52. This project looked at art as one of the identity markers and focused on the wall paintings of Syria and Lebanon and the Christian art in the Mosul area in the Medieval period, concluding that Muslim and Christian could not be distinguished on the basis of style or even iconography.

[118] A. Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition* (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975), 212–20.

[119] E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'The Monastery of Mor Barsawmo', 265. The Christian population in the region was high in the sixteenth century, see N. Göyünç, *XVI. Yüzyılda Mardin Sancağı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1969).

Postscript

This book has sought to provide a holistic picture of a frontier region in Late Antiquity through analysing its churches in their contexts. While just looking at the churches in isolation could be misleading, I have tried to look at the wider picture and understand what churches can tell us beyond their physical properties. While doing so, I have offered various readings of the material and made some tentative suggestions that have enabled me to discuss the context of this architecture further. The image of the church architecture of Northern Mesopotamia was usually based on a few well-known Syrian Orthodox churches and monasteries. Thus, its architecture was considered in isolation, mostly as a provincial architecture of no particular interest, and was treated as marginal, sometimes together with the churches in Sasanian Persia. I hope that with this study I have managed to show the dynamism of a frontier region in a period of time when it was first a stage of warfare and later under the control of Muslim Arabs.

Northern Mesopotamia, located between places with important traditions of architecture, was also a stage for Christological disputes, and later, a community's statement of identity. All of these factors resulted in a distinctive church architecture, not completely foreign but innovative, and with local touches. Thus, while we find external influences on the plan types, decoration, and building techniques, local skills and traditions also stand out. Imperial patronage in the region resulted in monumental church architecture with distinctive plans. In the monasteries, this patronage resulted in significant decoration. The church architecture was utilized by the emperors to project authority, approach the locals, and address the theological divides between communities.

This study hopes to offer a regional contribution to the study of the transformation that the Byzantine Empire underwent in the Late Antique period and the changes that the Arab conquest brought. This book shows the potential for new discoveries in the region, and the need for more detailed surveys and excavations, which will shed more light on the material discussed here, and may lead to different or further conclusions. The region has been politically unstable for decades. Thus, it has not been secure for fieldwork or excavations. Despite this, there has been encouraging work in the region, although sometimes interrupted. This book focused on churches but many other aspects of the Late Antique archaeology of the region still wait to be explored. I hope this book leads to further research in the region and stimulates discussion on some of the speculative suggestions that are presented here.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

ARAM	*Journal published by the ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Librarys*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CA	*Cahiers Archéologiques*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
CSHB	*Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*
DM	*Damaszener Mitteilungen*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
Hugoye	*Hugoye: Electronic Journal of Syriac Studies*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IM	*Istanbuler Mitteilungen*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRGS	*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*
JSAH	*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
OC	*Oriens Christianus*
ODTÜ	*Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi*
PdO	*Parole de l'Orient*
ROC	*Revue de l'Orient chrétien*
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
TM	*Travaux et Mémoires*

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